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Types of Poetry

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Preface

This volume is one of a group intended for use in a general course in English literature. It is equally adapted for use in an introductory course in poetry. Although based upon Professor Howard Judson Hall's comprehensive volume, *Types of Poetry*, this briefer book is edited for the use of less advanced students, and it offers a less detailed analysis of poetry. Consequently, the method of classification has been simplified, and the editorial matter has been in part condensed and in part rewritten.

Existing collections of poetry for colleges and schools are usually anthologies, with no arrangement other than a loosely chronological one and with no critical aids to study; or they are dry and routine presentations, ineffective as the students' first introduction to poetry that has sprung from passionate human experience. The editors of this book have endeavored to present a systematic approach to the study of poetry without sacrificing the joyous appreciation of a creative art.

To this end, the pages are printed in single columns, so that poems can appear as their authors wrote them, with the longer lines running freely across the page. The separate line is the unit of verse. It is unreasonable to suppose that a student will ever get the full force of the rhythm unless he can read long and sweeping lines of verse, untrammeled by the limitations of a double column.

The modernized passages from *Beowulf* and from Chaucer are offered to enable the student to read something of the older poetry as nearly as it can be represented in modern English verse. It is hoped that the student will regard *Beowulf* and "The Pardoner's Tale" as poetry, not merely as exercises for

linguistic study. In like manner, extensive and representative selections from contemporary poetry are included, to enable the student to judge fairly of the poetical achievement of his own age.

The introduction, the critical sketches, the chapter on verse structure, and the biographical index are necessarily brief, but they are meant to afford background for an intelligent reading of the poems. Together with the bibliography, they are meant to give some conception of the trend of present-day scholarship and literary criticism, as well as to offer guidance in more extensive reading. The footnotes are intended to answer such questions as those which have come up in the classroom, not to afford the editors an opportunity for learned dissertation.

Most of all, the editors have endeavored to offer complete poems, rather than selected fragments; and to give a fair proportion of full-length narratives, rather than a bewildering multitude of the short lyrics which fit so conveniently into a single volume. A few of the longest poetic forms, such as the epic, are unavoidedly represented by typical selections; but as nearly as possible the selection has been carried out so as to represent the poems, not to mutilate them. This volume is meant to be not a patchwork of favorite passages, but a collection of typical poems.

J.R.M.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

1. *Poetry as an Expression of Emotion or Imagination.* In the history of all nations, poetry appears as the earliest form of literary expression. Before man learned to use written records, he composed poetry; it was easy to remember verse and to chant it aloud. It could be sung to the dance or to the accompaniment of an instrument. Later it could be chiseled compactly on tablets of stone or written on the walls of caves. A chieftain of the Seneca Indians spoke in verse as he addressed the tribal council; a simple Greek of an early period used metrical form to give advice to farmers; the histories of the seafaring Norsemen were poetical narratives.

In more highly civilized countries the use of poetry becomes specialized, and prose is employed for most purposes, especially for records or for the expression of systematic thought. Most modern books are in the form of prose. It is not true, as Macaulay said, that "as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines"; but it is quite apparent that poetry ceases to be the whole of literature, and becomes rather its central shrine. Like the fire of the Vestal Virgins, it burns forever amid the clamor of the imperial city. It remains the expression of the deepest experiences and of the most characteristic imaginings of mankind. It is for this reason that Charles Darwin, in his later years, regretted that he had not read some poetry every day of his life; and it is for this reason that often a man who has won renown in other fields cherishes his poetry, perhaps unpublished and little known, as the real expression of himself.

2. *Influence of the Form of Poetry.* Of all kinds of literature, poetry owes most to the sound, to the rhythm, and to the asso-

ciative meaning of words. Most poetry is no longer sung; but whether read aloud or silently, poetry appeals to our "inner ear." And more than any other form of literature it appeals to emotional associations. A song is often based upon a single word or two, often upon a name rich in remembered meaning. "Home, Sweet Home," "Annie Laurie," "Bonnie Doon," "Loch Lomond," "Killarney," "My Maryland," "Swanee River," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and "Kentucky Home" are familiar examples. A whole body of songs was built up around the name of a romantic adventurer, "Bonnie Prince Charlie."

The first line is often more characteristic than the title, expressing as it does the rhythm of the verse, a suggestion of the thought, and often (especially in shorter lyrics) the key words upon which the poem is based.

Verse can be monotonously regular, or it can be so musical that it lulls one's judgment asleep.

> Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
> Life is but an empty dream

is too mechanical for sustained pleasure.

> Fills the shadows and windy places
> With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain

is too musical for sustained thought. But it may be seriously questioned whether the extremists among contemporary poets have not gone too far in their emphasis upon ideas rather than upon emotional impressions, upon images rather than upon sounds and rhythms. Certainly the greatest living poets are, nearly all of them, singers as well: blank verse, the freer forms of the heroic couplet, the ballad stanza, the rime royal, the sonnet, and the various song stanzas are far more customary in their writings than the less tuneful and more experimental forms. With the exception of Walt Whitman, no English or American poet ever won a reputation of the highest order through the medium of irregular verse. Even Whitman is not

so radical as he appears; for despite all his apparent irregularity, his remarkable sense of rhythm is one of his strongest sources of appeal to a cultivated reader—and he has never been widely read by any but cultivated readers.

3. *Poetry a Heightened Expression.* For generations after the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a controversy regarding the aims of poetry. To the followers of Pope, the highest quality of poetry was the expression of thought in perfect form, the utterance of ideas in the clearest and most pleasing language. To the extreme romantic critics, the highest qualities of poetry were imagination and emotion; any writings which lacked these were not poetry at all. Such controversies respecting literature will never cease, for they arise in the clash of philosophical ideas in the age. However, to persons of catholic taste, any heightened expression may have in it the essence of poetry. The wit of a satire, the wisdom of a philosophical poem, and the contemplative sadness of an elegy have their values quite as much as the passion of a love song or the intensity of a dramatic lyric. It is true that most of the finest poetry is emotional and imaginative; but it is a narrow definition which excludes reason and judgment when they are expressed with poetic art.

4. *Definition of Poetry.* In the hundreds of definitions which have been proposed for poetry, it is apparent that two very different concepts are being defined. Sometimes the definition is concerned with a *form*, but perhaps more often the critic has in mind a *quality*. It is the *quality* of poetry which has been defined in such terms as these: "the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power"; "the perpetual endeavor to express the spirit of a thing"; "a transfiguration of life"; "the expression of the imagination"; and "the suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for noble emotions."

Any of these definitions might be applied to other creative art; and indeed, musical compositions and paintings are sometimes loosely spoken of as poetic in feeling. It is the artistic *form* of

poetry that is stressed in the definition: *the expression in appropriate language, always rhythmical and usually metrical, of beautiful, lofty, or intense thought, imagination, or emotion.* Much poetry is not meant to be beautiful, but drably realistic; yet it must have a certain degree of imaginative intensity if it is to give poetic expression to drabness.

5. *Forms of Poetry.* Poetry is usually divided into three large classes: dramatic, narrative, and lyric. Such a grouping, like most others which the English language permits, is never quite precise and exclusive. Short dramatic poems, such monologues as Tennyson's "Ulysses" and Browning's "Saul," may be intensely lyrical; a short narrative, such as one of the best ballads, may have as much of lyrical emotion as of story-telling.

Roughly speaking, we may define the drama as concerned primarily with human character in action, the narrative as concerned with human action, and the lyric as concerned with human feeling. Full-length drama is usually treated as a separate form; except for some detached songs from plays, it is not represented in this volume. The longer narrative poems, such as the epic, can be represented here only by typical passages. But the shorter narrative poems and the principal kinds of lyrics are fully exemplified.

There are several other classes which are not primarily either narrative or lyrical, such as satire, the pastoral, and the elegy. These appear in this volume in a separate group as "Special Types of Poetry."

6. *History of English Poetry.* It is impossible to undertake any sketch of English poetry in a brief space. Poetry was the earliest achievement, and it has remained (with poetic drama) by far the greatest achievement, of our literature. A history of English poetry, such as Warton's or Courthope's, usually extends to several volumes, and is almost a history of English literature. The brief articles in the better encyclopedias are helpful, but the careful student is referred to the important works listed in the Bibliography (see page 523). In this col-

lection the date of publication is given for nearly every poem; where two dates are given, the earlier one indicates the date of composition. The Biographical Index (p. 495) will be found helpful in affording a brief sketch of the life of each author.

The inclusion of American as well as English poems in this volume is due to the growing recognition of the international character of our literature. Several Americans are represented in such a standard British anthology as *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Poe and Whitman have always been at least as well known abroad as at home. Hymns by Whittier and Holmes, according to the records of certain English churches for 1929, are among the outstanding favorites with English congregations. The bust of Longfellow, which was placed in Poets' Corner by his English admirers, does not seem out of place in Westminster Abbey. The English Brooke and the Canadian McCrae and the American Seeger wrote what are perhaps our finest poems of the World War. The new civic theater in Chicago is devoted to the production of Shakespeare's plays.

7. *Purpose of Poetry*. A few years ago Mr. George Moore edited an unusual anthology of English verse, from which he excluded every poem which contained a trace of moral purpose. The poems which he selected were frankly pagan in their acceptance of sensuous life. However, most of the outstanding poems of our language were missing from that anthology.

It is characteristic of English poetry that it is concerned with the values of life. Even Poe, for all his opposition to the tiresome didactic poetry of his age, hailed his Israfel as "Best bard, because the wisest." It was Shelley who defined poetry as "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." But it was also Shelley who wrote

> We look before and after
> And pine for what is not:
> Our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught;
> Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet of all forms of art, none suffers more than poetry from being fettered to a rigid intellectual conception or to a tedious moral purpose. It might be said of poetry, as it was said of the Spirit, "The wind bloweth where it listeth"; for it is the poet's province to give expression to his own view of life. The fashionable versifier, like the popular journalist, may seize upon the fads of his own day and achieve a temporary success. The historian of literature will be obliged to study him as a phenomenon of his age, much as a scientist studies a fossil skeleton or an extinct volcano.

But the true poet is timeless. We throng into his narrow cottage in Stratford or in Ayr; we lay flowers upon his simple tomb in the grounds of the Middle Temple. We carry his poems in our pockets as we go into battle; we sing his hymn of faith as our transatlantic liner sinks in mid-ocean. He is a friend of our lonely hours, a spur to our endeavor, a prophet of our triumphant achievement. He is immortal, and outlives the very words which he writes; we translate his living thoughts from dead languages and buried inscriptions. Indeed, the true poet can never die; for "he being dead yet speaketh."

Types of Poetry

Narrative Poetry

The Popular Ballad

The popular ballad is a short narrative poem of unknown authorship, usually in a simple four-line stanza, which is preserved by word of mouth. Few ballads have been printed until they have been for some time recited or sung.

The story in the ballad is told in an unaffected manner, with little ornament and little personal emotion. What emotion it does express is likely to be related to a tragic situation; and what ornament it has is likely to appear in the use of certain fixed methods or devices, such as a refrain, repetition, the use of favorite numbers (as three and seven), and conventional descriptive phrases.

The ballad rarely explains or comments on anything; it tells its story with a stark directness, sometimes heightened by suspense (as in "Edward") or by the omission of part of the action (as in "Sir Patrick Spens"). Most ballads were composed in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries; but they can never be dated with any accuracy unless they are based on well-established historical events. The best ballads were composed in southern Scotland and in northern England, so that one critic has made a guess that many of them may have been written by one great ballad poet who lived in that region. But the authors of these traditional ballads are never known.

To students of literature the popular ballads are important in three different ways:

1. The best of them are fine narrative poems, likely to be read as long as any other poetry in English. In out-of-the-way places they have not entirely ceased to be sung. Of the 305 recognized English and Scottish ballads, more than 90 have been rediscovered in the United States, where they are still sung with pleasure by older people who have no frequent contact with the literature of the outside world.

2. The ballads have had an enormous influence on all subsequent poetry. They have given rise to the type known as the artistic ballad, and they have had a great influence on all modern narrative and lyric poetry. The Romantic school of poetry, in particular, owed more to the ballad than to any other type.

3. For about a century, until recent years, a theory was widely held in Germany and in America that the ballads are folk-poetry rather than art-poetry; that they represent the oldest form of poetry, from which later and more developed forms have sprung, and that they were composed by groups engaged in a dance or game or some other communal activity, rather than by individual authors. It was often admitted that the ballads which we have were written by individual authors, but it was held that even these have been greatly influenced by the form and style of earlier ballads of a communal origin.

This theory has never been widely held in England, and it is now being rather generally abandoned in America. In spite of the survivals of popular beliefs and customs which make the ballads interesting to the student of folklore, there is no good reason to consider them as the

most primitive form of poetry, or to suppose that dancing throngs are very helpful in understanding narrative poetry.

The ballads, or story-telling poems, are not to be confused with folk-songs, which are not narratives at all. There are also two kinds of ballads which are quite different from the true popular ballad. After the middle of the sixteenth century journalistic ballads were developed for circulation on rather large printed sheets of paper, from which they took their name "broadsides." These dealt with current news, rumor, or scandal, and were sold in the streets much like modern newspapers. Still later there arose the modern popular ballad, sometimes called the vulgar ballad, dealing with all sorts of sensational or sentimental subjects. The modern ballad is often printed, but it also circulates in oral currency. It differs from the older popular ballad in its lack of poetic quality. It often deals with the lives of a single class of men, as cowboys. It is quite devoid of the aristocratic or elevated tone of the older traditional ballad. This difference can be observed by any reader who will compare "Sir Patrick Spens" with a modern ballad such as "Casey Jones."

A vast literature on the subject has grown up, consisting of collections of ballads and also critical studies of their origin, nature, and development. Representative works of both kinds are listed in the Bibliography (page 523). The most authoritative brief article on the subject, together with good bibliographies, has been contributed to the Fourteenth Edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* by G. Gregory Smith and Louise Pound.

Sir Patrick Spens

1. The king sits in Dumferling[1] toune,
   Drinking the blude-reid wine:
   'O whar will I get guid sailor,
   To sail this schip of mine?'

2. Up and spak an eldern knicht, 5
   Sat at the kings richt kne:
   'Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor,
   That sails upon the se.'

3. The king has written a braid letter,
   And signd it wi his hand, 10
   And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
   Was walking on the sand.

4. The first line that Sir Patrick red,
   A loud lauch lauched he;
   The next line that Sir Patrick red, 15
   The teir blinded his ee.

5. 'O wha is this has don this deid,
   This ill deid don to me,
   To send me out this time o' the yeir,
   To sail upon the se! 20

6. 'Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,
   Our guid schip sails the morne':
   'O say na sae, my master deir,
   For I feir a deadlie storme.

7. 'Late late yestreen I saw the new moone, 25
   Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
   And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
   That we will cum to harme.'

[1] Dunfermline, the old Scottish capital.

8. O our Scots nobles were richt laith[1]
To weet their cork-heild schoone; 30
Bot lang owre[2] a' the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.

9. O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand;
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence 35
Cum sailing to the land.

10. O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems[3] in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll se thame na mair. 40

11. Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,[4]
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

The Wife of Usher's Well

1. There lived a wife at Usher's Well,
And a wealthy wife was she;
She had three stout and stalwart sons,
And sent them oer the sea.

2. They hadna been a week from her, 5
A week but barely ane,
When word came to the carline wife[5]
That her three sons were gane.

[1] loath. [2] ere. [3] combs.
[4] A seaport a few miles east of Dunfermline just north of Edinburgh.
[5] old woman.

3. They hadna been a week from her,
A week but barely three, 10
When word came to the carlin wife
That her sons she'd never see.

4. 'I wish the wind may never cease,
Nor fashes in the flood,
Till my three sons come hame to me, 15
In earthly flesh and blood.'

5. It fell about the Martinmass,
When nights are lang and mirk,
The carlin wife's three sons came hame,
And their hats were o the birk.[1] 20

6. It neither grew in syke[2] nor ditch,
Nor yet in ony sheugh[2];
But at the gates o Paradise,
That birk grew fair eneugh.

. . . . . .

7. 'Blow up the fire, my maidens! 25
Bring water from the well!
For a' my house shall feast this night,
Since my three sons are well.'

8. And she has made to them a bed,
She's made it large and wide, 30
And she's ta'en her mantle her about,
Sat down at the bed-side.

. . . . . .

9. Up then crew the red, red cock,
And up and crew the gray;
The eldest to the youngest said, 35
''Tis time we were away.'

[1] birch, a tree which grew in the land of the dead.
[2] *Syke* and *sheugh* both mean "trench" or "ditch."

10. The cock he hadna craw'd but once,
And clappd his wings at a',
When the youngest to the eldest said,
'Brother, we must awa. 40

11. 'The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,
The channerin[1] worm doth chide;
Gin we be mist out o our place,
A sair pain we maun bide.

12. 'Fare ye weel, my mother dear! 45
Fareweel to barn and byre[2]!
And fare ye weel, the bonny lass
That kindles my mother's fire!'

Lord Randal

1. 'O where hae ye been, Lord Randal, my son?
O where hae ye been, my handsome young man?'
'I hae been to the wild wood; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

2. 'Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randal, my son? 5
Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?'
'I din'd wi my true-love; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

3. 'What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randal, my son? 9
What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?'
'I gat eels boiled in broo[3]; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

4. 'What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randal, my son?
What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?'
'O they swell'd and they died; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.' 16

[1] complaining. [2] cow house. [3] broth.

5. 'O I fear ye are poison'd, Lord Randal, my son!
O I fear ye are poison'd, my handsome young man!'
'O yes! I am poison'd; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart and I fain wald lie down.' 20

Thomas Rymer

1. True Thomas lay oer yond grassy bank,
And he beheld a ladie gay,
A ladie that was brisk and bold,
Come riding oer the fernie brae.[1]

2. Her skirt was of the grass-green silk, 5
Her mantle of the velvet fine,
At ilka tett[2] of her horse's mane
Hung fifty silver bells and nine.

3. True Thomas he took off his hat
And bowed him low down till his knee: 10
'All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
For your peer on earth I never did see.'

4. 'O no, O no, True Thomas,' she says,
'That name does not belong to me;
I am but the queen of fair Elfland, 15
And I'm come here for to visit thee.

5. ['Harp and carp,[3] Thomas,' she said,
'Harp and carp along wi me;
But if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be.' 20

[1] a steep bank; often, a hillside.
[2] lock.
[3] tell tales, perhaps to the harp.

6. 'Betide me weal, betide me woe,
That weird[1] shall never daunton me';—
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips
All underneath the Eildon[2] Tree.][3]

7. 'But ye maun go wi me now, Thomas, 25
True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,
For ye maun serve me seven years,
Thro weel or wae as may chance to be.'

8. She turned about her milk-white steed,
And took True Thomas up behind, 30
And aye when eer her bridle rang,
The steed flew swifter than the wind.

9. For forty days and forty nights
He wade thro red blude to the knee,
And he saw neither sun nor moon, 35
But heard the roaring of the sea.

10. O they rade on and further on,
Until they came to a garden green:
'Light down, light down, ye ladie free,
Some of that fruit let me pull to thee.' 40

11. 'O no, O no, True Thomas,' she says,
'That fruit maun not be touched by thee,
For a' the plagues that are in hell
Light on the fruit of this countrie.

12. 'But I have a loaf here in my lap, 45
Likewise a bottle of claret wine,
And here ere we go farther on,
We'll rest a while, and ye may dine.'

[1] destiny, fate.
[2] The Eildon Hills are near Melrose, in southern Scotland.
[3] Stanzas 5 and 6 are from another version of the ballad.

13. When he had eaten and drunk his fill,
'Lay down your head upon my knee,' 50
The lady sayd, 'ere we climb yon hill,
And I will show you fairlies[1] three.

14. 'O see ye not yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi thorns and briers?
That is the path of righteousness, 55
Tho after it but few enquires.

15. 'And see not ye that braid braid road,
That lies across yon lillie leven[2]?
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho some call it the road to heaven. 60

16. 'And see ye not that bonny road,
Which winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where you and I this night maun gae.

17. 'But Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue, 65
Whatever ye may hear or see,
For gin ae word you should chance to speak,
You will neer get back to your ain countrie.'

18. He has gotten a coat of the even[3] cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green, 70
And till seven years were past and gone
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

Edward

1. 'Why dois your brand sae drap wi bluid,
Edward, Edward,
Why dois your brand sae drap wi bluid,
And why sae sad gang yee O?'

[1] wonders. [2] open ground in a forest. [3] smooth.

'O I hae killed my hauke sae guid, 5
Mither, mither,
O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
And I had nae mair bot hee O.'

2. 'Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
Edward, Edward, 10
Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
My deir son I tell thee O.'
'O I hae killed my reid-roan steid,
Mither, mither,
O I hae killed my reid-roan steid, 15
That erst was sae fair and frie O.'

3. 'Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Edward, Edward,
Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Sum other dule[1] ye drie[2] O.' 20
'O I hae killed my fadir deir,
Mither, mither,
O I hae killed my fadir deir,
Alas, and wae is mee O!'

4. 'And whatten penance wul ye drie, for that, 25
Edward, Edward,
And whatten penance wul ye drie, for that?
My deir son, now tell me O.'
'Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
Mither, mither, 30
Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
And Ile fare ovir the sea O.'

5. 'And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,
Edward, Edward,
And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha, 35

[1] grief. [2] suffer.

That were sae fair to see O?'
'Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,
Mither, mither,
Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,
For here nevir mair maun I bee O.' 40

6. 'And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Edward, Edward,
And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Whan ye gang ovir the sea O?'
'The warldis[1] room, late them beg thrae life, 45
Mither, mither,
The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,
For thame nevir mair wul I see O.'

7. 'And what wul ye leive to your ain mither dear,
Edward, Edward, 50
And what wul ye leive to your ain mither dear?
My deir son, now tell me O.'
'The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Mither, mither,
The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir, 55
Sic counseils ye gave to me O.'

[1] world's.

The Artistic Ballad

The artistic ballad is the work of a modern poet who consciously adopts the old ballad form in order to escape from the conventions of his own age, and thus to secure freedom and new vigor of expression. The Romantic Movement is often dated from the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798.

Until the appearance of Percy's great collection, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), containing many other kinds of poetry besides ballads, critics had given little attention to the ballads. Only occasionally had individuals such as Sidney, Addison, and Goldsmith said a good word for them. On the stage they had won recognition through the success of such plays as Lillo's "George Barnwell" (based on an old broadside ballad) and Home's "Douglas" (based on one of the finest of popular ballads). Imitations of the older ballads were put forward during the eighteenth century by many writers, among whom were Prior, Goldsmith, Percy, Chatterton, and Cowper. But it was not until the Romantic Movement gained headway that the form was seized upon as a means of serious artistic expression. Ballads were written by most poets of note during the nineteenth century, and even today they constitute one of the principal types of narrative poetry.

The chief difference between the artistic and the older popular ballads is that artistic ballads express the author's personality and his philosophical and artistic environment. Wordsworth and Coleridge shaped their ballads accord-

ing to their theories of the nature of poetry as well as their own special poetic gifts. Scott, who was the greatest individual collector of traditional ballads, wrote imitations with such sympathy and understanding that one cannot always be sure whether he was reconstructing and recasting a popular ballad or composing a ballad of his own. The artistic ballad was to him indeed not a means of escape from a literary convention, but the natural way of writing poetry. Dante Gabriel Rossetti made of the ballad a highly ornate and artificial form, as conscious in its artistry as his paintings. More recently, as in "The Ballad of Moll Magee" by Yeats, the form has been used for drab realism or for simple and direct narration.

The finest of the artistic ballads is "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which retains the simplicity and vigor of the older ballad narratives, and adds the beauty of style and the richness of imaginative background possessed by a great modern poet.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

ARGUMENT

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

PART I

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin; 6
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he. 10
'Hold off! unhand me, gray-beard loon!'
Eftsoons[1] his hand dropt he.

The Wedding-Guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child: 15
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. 20

'The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line.

The sun came up upon the left, 25
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—' 30
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

[1] at once.

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music; but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes 35
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. 40

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.

'And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow, 45
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled. 50

The land of ice and of fearful sounds, where no living thing was to be seen.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts 55
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around: 60
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul, 65
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through! 70

And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating ice.

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud, 75
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen.

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—'With my cross-bow 81
I shot the ALBATROSS.

PART II

'The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left 85
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo! 90

His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow! 96

But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist. 100
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst 105
Into that silent sea.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea! 110

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day, 115
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink; 120
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs 125
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white. 130

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root; 136
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

Ah! well-a-day![1] what evil looks
Had I from old and young! 140
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

'There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time! 145
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.

[1] An exclamation of grief.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist; 150
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite, 155
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

With throats unslacked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, 160
And cried, A sail! a sail!

A flash of joy;

With throats unslacked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy![1] they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in, 165
As they were drinking all.

And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel! 170

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was wellnigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun; 174
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

[1] An exclamation of surprise or wonder.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face. 180

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun.

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate? 186

The Specter-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton ship.

And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
Is DEATH that woman's mate?

Like vessel, like crew!

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold: 191
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship's crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner.

The naked hulk alongside came, 195
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark; 200
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the specter-bark.

At the rising of the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

My life-blood seemed to sip! 205
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.[1] 211

One after another,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye. 215

His shipmates drop down dead.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly,— 220
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!'

PART IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand! 225
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
'Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down. 231

[1] An impossible phenomenon; hence, foreboding ill to the superstitious sailors See J. L. Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu* (1927), pp. 179–185.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony. 235

He despiseth the creatures of the calm

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea, 240
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht, 245
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky 250
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away. 256

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye! 260
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up, 265
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway 270
A still and awful red.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes. 276

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black.
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire. 281

Their beauty and their happiness.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware: 285
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

He blesseth them in his heart.

The spell begins to break.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank 290
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

'Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul. 296

By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained. 300

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost 306
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear; 310
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,[1]
To and fro they were hurried about! 315
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

[1] bright.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud; 320
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag, 325
A river steep and wide.

The bodies of the ship's crew are inspired, and the ship moves on;

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan. 330

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew; 336
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew. 340

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.'

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!' 345
'Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

But not by the souls of the men, nor by demons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms, 350
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun; 355
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are, 360
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song, 365
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June, 370
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship 375
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome Spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The Spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go. 380
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir, 385
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound: 390
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

The Polar Spirit's fellow demons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned, 395
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low 400
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow." 405

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."

PART VI

First Voice

"'But tell me, tell me! speak again, 410
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?"

Second Voice

"Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast; 415
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously 420
She looketh down on him."

First Voice

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure.

"But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?"

Second Voice

"The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind. 425

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated."

The supernatural motion is retarded; the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on 430
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter: 435
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs, 440
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is finally expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen— 445

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend 450
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade. 455

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship, 460
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see? 465
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
"O let me be awake, my God! 470
Or let me sleep alway."

The harbor-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon. 475

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same, 481
Full many shapes. that shadows were,
In crimson colors came.

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,

And appear in their own forms of light.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were: 485
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man, 490
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light; 495

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars, 500
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast: 505
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns 510
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

The Hermit of the Wood

·This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea. 515
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump: 520
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
"Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?" 526

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

"Strange, by my faith!" the Hermit said—
"And they answered not our cheer!
The planks look warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere! 530
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow, 535
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young."

"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared"—"Push on, push on!"
Said the Hermit cheerily. 541

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard. 545

The ship suddenly sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote, 551
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat. 555

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked 560
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go, 565
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
"Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row."

And now, all in my own countree, 570
I stood on the firm land!

The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrieve him; and the penance of life falls on him.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"
The Hermit crossed his brow.[1] 575
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale; 580
And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land,

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns. 585

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach. 590

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell, 595
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be. 600

[1] made the sign of the cross on his forehead, to invoke divine protection.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company! —

To walk together to the kirk, 605
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth.

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell 610
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small; 615
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest 620
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn. 625

[1798]

The Artistic Ballad

Lucy Gray; or, Solitude

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

[This poem, belonging to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, illustrates the poems of the "other sort" than that of "The Ancient Mariner" that were to make up the collection. "Mr. Wordsworth," Coleridge says, ". . . was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural." Lucy Gray, it may be said, tells a story of actual fact.]

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew; 5
She dwelt on a wide moor,
—The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green; 10
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

'Tonight will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go;
And take a lantern, Child, to light 15
Your mother through the snow.'

'That, Father! will I gladly do:
'Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster-clock[1] has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!' 20

At this the father raised his hook,
And snapped a faggot-band;

[1] *minster*, the church of a monastery; sometimes a cathedral or any large church.

He plied his work;—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe: 25
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time:
She wandered up and down; 30
And many a hill did Lucy climb:
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight 35
To serve them for a guide.

At daybreak on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door. 40

They wept—and, turning homeward, cried,
'In heaven we all shall meet';
—When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge 45
They tracked the footmarks small;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone-wall;

And then an open field they crossed:
The marks were still the same; 50
They tracked them on, nor ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank; 55
And further there were none!

—Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild. 60

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.
[1800]

Lord Ullin's Daughter

THOMAS CAMPBELL

A chieftain to the Highlands bound
  Cries, 'Boatman, do not tarry!
And I'll give thee a silver pound,
  To row us o'er the ferry.'

'Now who be ye would cross Lochgyle, 5
  This dark and stormy water?'
'Oh, I'm the chief of Ulva's Isle,
  And this Lord Ullin's daughter.

'And fast before her father's men
  Three days we've fled together, 10
For, should he find us in the glen,
  My blood would stain the heather.

'His horsemen hard behind us ride;
  Should they our steps discover,
Then who will cheer my bonny bride 15
  When they have slain her lover?'

Outspoke the hardy Highland wight,
  'I'll go, my chief! I'm ready;
It is not for your silver bright,
  But for your winsome lady: 20

'And by my word! the bonny bird
  In danger shall not tarry;
So, though the waves are raging white
  I'll row you o'er the ferry.'

By this the storm grew loud apace, 25
  The water-wraith was shrieking;
And in the scowl of heaven each face
  Grew dark as they were speaking.

But still, as wilder blew the wind,
  And as the night grew drearer, 30
Adown the glen rode armèd men—
  Their trampling sounded nearer.

'O haste thee, haste!' the lady cries,
  'Though tempests round us gather;
I'll meet the raging of the skies, 35
  But not an angry father.'

The boat has left a stormy land,
  A stormy sea before her,—
When, oh! too strong for human hand,
  The tempest gathered o'er her. 40

And still they rowed amidst the roar
  Of waters fast prevailing:
Lord Ullin reached that fatal shore,—
  His wrath was changed to wailing.

For sore dismayed, through storm and shade, 45
  His child he did discover:
One lovely hand she stretched for aid,
  And one was round her lover.

'Come back! come back!' he cried in grief
  Across this stormy water: 50
'And I'll forgive your Highland chief,
  My daughter! Oh my daughter!'

'Twas vain: the loud waves lashed the shore,
  Return or aid preventing;
The waters wild went o'er his child, 55
  And he was left lamenting.

[1809]

The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna[1]

CHARLES WOLFE

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
  As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
  O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night, 5
  The sods with our bayonets turning,
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light
  And the lantern dimly burning.

No useless coffin inclosed his breast,
  Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him; 10
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
  With his martial cloak around him.

Few and short were the prayers we said,
  And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we steadfastly gazed on the face that was dead, 15
  And we bitterly thought of the morrow.

[1] La Coruña, a seaport in northwestern Spain. Here the British general was killed in the heroic defensive battle (January 16, 1809) which enabled his sick and demoralized soldiers to embark safely for England.

We thought, as we hollowed his narrow bed
  And smoothed down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,
  And we far away on the billow! 20

Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,
  And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him—
But little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on
  In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

But half of our heavy task was done 25
  When the clock struck the hour for retiring;
And we heard the distant and random gun
  That the foe was sullenly firing.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
  From the field of his fame fresh and gory; 30
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
  But we left him alone with his glory.

[1817]

Proud Maisie

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Proud Maisie is in the wood,
  Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
  Singing so rarely.

'Tell me, thou bonny bird, 5
  When shall I marry me?'
'When six braw gentlemen
  Kirkward shall carry ye.'

'Who makes the bridal bed,
  Birdie, say truly?' 10
'The gray-headed sexton
  That delves the grave duly.

'The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
  Shall light thee steady.
The owl from the steeple sing, 15
  "Welcome, proud lady."'

[1818]

La Belle Dame sans Merci

JOHN KEATS

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
  Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
  And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms, 5
  So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
  And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
  With anguish moist and fever dew, 10
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
  Fast withereth too.

'I met a lady in the meads,
  Full beautiful—a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light, 15
  And her eyes were wild.

'I made a garland for her head,
  And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
  And made sweet moan. 20

'I set her on my pacing steed,
  And nothing else saw all day long,
For sideways would she lean, and sing
  A faery's song.

'She found me roots of relish sweet, 25
  And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
  "I love thee true."

'She took me to her elfin grot,
  And there she wept and sigh'd full sore, 30
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
  With kisses four.

'And there she lulled me asleep,
  And there I dream'd—ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dream'd 35
  On the cold hill's side.

'I saw pale kings and princes too,
  Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci
  Hath thee in thrall!" 40

'I saw their starved lips in the gloom,
  With horrid warning gaped wide;
And I awoke, and found me here
  On the cold hill's side.

'And this is why I sojourn here, 45
  Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
  And no birds sing.'

[1820]

The Blessed Damozel

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

The blessed damozel leaned out
  From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
  Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand, 5
  And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
  No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
  For service meetly worn; 10
Her hair that lay along her back
  Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
  One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone 15
  From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
  Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
  . . . Yet now, and in this place, 20
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
  Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
  The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house 25
  That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
  The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
  She scarce could see the sun, 30

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
  Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
  With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth 35
  Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
  'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
  Their heart-remembered names; 40
And the souls mounting up to God
  Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
  Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made 45
  The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
  Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
  Time like a pulse shake fierce 50
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
  Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
  The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon 55
  Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
  She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
  Had when they sang together. 60

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
  Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be harkened? When those bells
  Possess the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side 65
  Down all the echoing stair?)

'I wish that he were come to me,
  For he will come,' she said.
'Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
  Lord, Lord, has he not prayed? 70
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
  And shall I feel afraid?

'When round his head the aureole clings,
  And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him 75
  To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
  And bathe there in God's sight.

'We two will stand beside that shrine,
  Occult, withheld, untrod, 80
Whose lamps are stirred continually
  With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
  Each like a little cloud.

'We two will lie i' the shadow of 85
  That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
  Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
  Saith His Name audibly. 90

'And I myself will teach to him,
  I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
  Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause, 95
  Or some new thing to know.'

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
  Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
  To endless unity 100
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
  Was but its love for thee?)

'We two,' she said, 'will seek the groves
  Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names 105
  Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
  Margaret and Rosalys.

'Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
  And foreheads garlanded; 110
Into the fine cloth white like flame
  Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
  Who are just born, being dead.

'He shall fear, haply, and be dumb: 115
  Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
  Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
  My pride, and let me speak. 120

'Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
  To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
  Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing 125
  To their citherns and citoles.

'There will I ask of Christ the Lord
  Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
  With Love,—only to be, 130
As then awhile, forever now
  Together, I and he.'

She gazed and listened and then said,
  Less sad of speech than mild,—
'All this is when he comes.' She ceased. 135
  The light thrilled towards her, filled
With angels in strong level flight.
  Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
  Was vague in distant spheres: 140
And then she cast her arms along
  The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
  And wept. (I heard her tears.)
[1850]

The Three Fishers

CHARLES KINGSLEY

Three fishers went sailing away to the West,
  Away to the West as the sun went down;
Each thought on the woman who loved him the best,
  And the children stood watching them out of the town;

For men must work, and women must weep, 5
And there's little to earn, and many to keep,
  Though the harbor bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower,
  And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down; 9
They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,
  And the night-rack came rolling up ragged and brown.
But men must work, and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden, and waters deep,
  And the harbor bar be moaning.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands 15
  In the morning gleam as the tide went down,
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands
  For those who will never come home to the town;
For men must work, and women must weep,
And the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep; 20
  And good-by to the bar and its moaning.
[1851]

Shameful Death

WILLIAM MORRIS

There were four of us about that bed;
  The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I and his mother stood at the head,
  Over his feet lay the bride;
We were quite sure that he was dead, 5
  Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,
  He did not die in the day,
But in the morning twilight
  His spirit pass'd away, 10
When neither sun nor moon was bright,
  And the trees were merely gray.

He was not slain with the sword,
  Knight's ax, or the knightly spear,
Yet spoke he never a word 15
  After he came in here;
I cut away the cord
  From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,
  For the recreants came behind, 20
In a place where the hornbeams grow,
  A path right hard to find,
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,
  That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then, 25
  When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
  Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
  Hung brave Lord Hugh at last. 30

I am threescore and ten,
  And my hair is all turn'd gray,
But I met Sir John of the Fen
  Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when 35
  I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
  And my strength is mostly pass'd,
But long ago I and my men,
  When the sky was overcast, 40
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the fen,
  Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
  I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,
A good knight and a true,
  And for Alice, his wife, pray too.
[1858]

The Ballad of Judas Iscariot

ROBERT BUCHANAN

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
  Lay in the Field of Blood;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Beside the body stood.

Black was the earth by night,
  And black was the sky;
Black, black were the broken clouds,
  Tho' the red Moon went by.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
  Strangled and dead lay there;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Looked on it in despair.

The breath of the World came and went
  Like a sick man's in rest;
Drop by drop on the World's eyes
  The dews fell cool and blest.

Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Did make a gentle moan—
'I will bury underneath the ground
  My flesh and blood and bone.

'I will bury deep beneath the soil,
  Lest mortals look thereon,
And when the wolf and raven come
  The body will be gone!

'The stones of the field are sharp as steel, 25
  And hard and cold, God wot;
And I must bear my body hence
  Until I find a spot!'

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  So grim, and gaunt, and gray, 30
Raised the body of Judas Iscariot,
  And carried it away.

And as he bare it from the field
  Its touch was cold as ice,
And the ivory teeth within the jaw 35
  Rattled aloud, like dice.

As the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Carried its load with pain,
The Eye of Heaven, like a lanthorn's eye,
  Opened and shut again. 40

Half he walked, and half he seemed
  Lifted on the cold wind;
He did not turn, for chilly hands
  Were pushing from behind.

The first place that he came unto 45
  It was the open wold,
And underneath were prickly whins,[1]
  And a wind that blew so cold.

[1] coarse, thorny shrubs.

The next place that he came unto
  It was a stagnant pool, 50
And when he threw the body in
  It floated light as wool.

He drew the body on his back,
  And it was dripping chill,
And the next place that he came unto 55
  Was a Cross upon a hill.

A Cross upon the windy hill,
  And a Cross on either side,
Three skeletons that swing thereon,
  Who had been crucified. 60

And on the middle cross-bar sat
  A white Dove slumbering;
Dim it sat in the dim light,
  With its head beneath its wing.

And underneath the middle Cross 65
  A grave yawned wide and vast,
But the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Shivered, and glided past.

The fourth place that he came unto
  It was the Brig[1] of Dread, 70
And the great torrents rushing down
  Were deep, and swift and red.

He dared not fling the body in
  For fear of faces dim,
And arms were waved in the wild water 75
  To thrust it back to him.

[1] Bridge.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Turned from the Brig of Dread,
And the dreadful foam of the wild water
  Had splashed the body red. 80

For days and nights he wandered on,
  Upon an open plain,
And the days went by like blinding mist,
  And the nights like rushing rain.

For days and nights he wandered on, 85
  All thro' the Wood of Woe;
And the nights went by like moaning wind,
  And the days like drifting snow.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Came with a weary face— 90
Alone, alone, and all alone,
  Alone in a lonely place!

He wandered east, he wandered west,
  And heard no human sound;
For months and years, in grief and tears, 95
  He wandered round and round.

For months and years, in grief and tears,
  He walked the silent night;
Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Perceived a far-off light. 100

A far-off light across the waste,
  As dim as dim might be,
That came and went like the lighthouse gleam
  On a black night at sea.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot 105
  Crawled to the distant gleam;
And the rain came down, and the rain was blown
  Against him with a scream.

For days and nights he wandered on,
  Pushed on by hands behind; 110
And the days went by like black, black rain,
  And the nights like rushing wind.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,
  Strange, and sad, and tall,
Stood all alone at dead of night 115
  Before a lighted hall.

And the wold was white with snow,
  And his foot-marks black and damp,
And the ghost of the silver Moon arose,
  Holding her yellow lamp. 120

And the icicles were on the eaves,
  And the walls were deep with white,
And the shadows of the guests within
  Passed on the window light.

The shadows of the wedding guests 125
  Did strangely come and go,
And the body of Judas Iscariot
  Lay stretched along the snow.

The body of Judas Iscariot
  Lay stretched along the snow; 130
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Ran swiftly to and fro.

To and fro, and up and down,
  He ran so swiftly there,
As round and round the frozen pole 135
  Glideth the lean white bear.

'Twas the Bridegroom sat at the table-head,
  And the lights burnt bright and clear—
'Oh, who is that?' the Bridegroom said,
  'Whose weary feet I hear?' 140

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,
  And answered soft and slow,
'It is a wolf runs up and down
  With a black track in the snow.'

The Bridegroom in his robe of white 145
  Sat at the table-head—
'Oh, who is that who moans without?'
  The blessed Bridegroom said.

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,
  And answered fierce and low, 150
''Tis the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Gliding to and fro.'

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Did hush itself and stand,
And saw the Bridegroom at the door 155
  With a light in his hand.

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
  And he was clad in white,
And far within the Lord's Supper
  Was spread so broad and bright. 160

The Bridegroom shaded his eyes and looked,
  And his face was bright to see—
'What dost thou here at the Lord's Supper
  With thy body's sins?' said he.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot 165
  Stood black, and sad, and bare—
'I have wandered many nights and days;
  There is no light elsewhere.'

'Twas the wedding guests cried out within,
  And their eyes were fierce and bright— 170
'Scourge the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Away into the night!'

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
  And he waved hands still and slow,
And the third time that he waved his hands 175
  The air was thick with snow.

And of every flake of falling snow,
  Before it touched the ground,
There came a dove, and a thousand doves
  Made sweet sound. 180

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
  Floated away full fleet,
And the wings of the doves that bare it off
  Were like its winding-sheet.

'Twas the Bridegroom stood at the open door, 185
  And beckoned, smiling sweet;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Stole in, and fell at his feet.

'The Holy Supper is spread within,
And the many candles shine, 190
And I have waited long for thee
Before I poured the wine!'

The supper wine is poured at last,
The lights burn bright and fair,
Iscariot washes the Bridegroom's feet, 195
And dries them with his hair.

The Ballad of Moll Magee[1]

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Come round me, little childer;
There, don't fling stones at me
Because I mutter as I go;
But pity Moll Magee.

My man was a poor fisher 5
With shore lines in the say;
My work was saltin' herrings
The whole of the long day.

And sometimes from the saltin' shed,
I scarce could drag my feet 10
Under the blessed moonlight,
Along the pebbly street.

I'd always been but weakly,
And my baby was just born;
A neighbor minded her by day, 15
I minded her till morn.

[1] From William Butler Yeats's *Poetical Works*, Vol. I. Copyright, 1917, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

I lay upon my baby;
Ye little childer dear,
I looked on my cold baby
When the morn grew frosty and clear. 20

A weary woman sleeps so hard!
My man grew red and pale,
And gave me money, and bade me go
To my own place, Kinsale.

He drove me out and shut the door, 25
And gave his curse to me;
I went away in silence,
No neighbor could I see.

The windows and the doors were shut,
One star shone faint and green; 30
The little straws were turnin' round
Across the bare boreen.[1]

I went away in silence:
Beyond old Martin's byre[2]
I saw a kindly neighbor 35
Blowin' her mornin' fire.

She drew from me my story—
My money's all used up,
And still, with pityin', scornin' eye,
She gives me bite and sup. 40

She says my man will surely come,
And fetch me home agin;
But always, as I'm movin' round,
Without doors or within,

[1] lane. [2] cow house.

Pilin' the wood or pilin' the turf, 45
Or goin' to the well,
I'm thinkin' of my baby
And keenin' to mysel'.

And sometimes I am sure she knows
When, openin' wide His door, 50
God lights the stars, His candles,
And looks upon the poor.

So now, ye little childer,
Ye won't fling stones at me;
But gather with your shinin' looks 55
And pity Moll Magee.

[1889]

The Medieval Tale

A favorite device of the Middle Ages was a group of tales, supposedly told by different men and women in a company which had been brought together by chance.

In English literature the most notable of such collections is found in *The Canterbury Tales*, a group of stories told by pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury. In these stories Chaucer illustrates the principal types of narrative writing in vogue at the time, such as the knightly romance, the saintly legend, the ribald tale, the satirical fable, and the moralizing story.

Chaucer's stories are excellent examples of their several types, and in addition they have a new element—psychological interpretation. Chaucer individualized each speaker, he introduced the tales with such dramatic skill as to bring out the character of each important member of the company, and he made each story typical of its narrator.

One of the greatest of these stories is "The Pardoner's Tale," the central episode of which is given here in modern English verse closely patterned after the original verse of Chaucer. It is told by the Pardoner[1] as an example of the moral tales which he uses in the pulpit. The narrator, who has begun the story in a jesting exhibition of his powers, ends by rousing himself to a real eloquence of appeal, and he becomes intensely angry when the Host answers him in coarse jest.

[1] The Pardoner was one who sold indulgences, that is, absolution from the censures and public penances of the church.

The Medieval Tale

The Pardoner's Tale

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

[From *The Canterbury Tales.* Modernized from the original Middle English by John Robert Moore.]

. . . These rioters, the three of whom I tell,
Long before nine was rung by morning bell,
Had sat them in a tavern for to drink;
And as they sat, they heard a hand-bell clink
Before a body carried to its grave. 5
Then one of them called out unto his knave,[1]
'Go quick,' he said, 'and question speedily
What corpse is this that now is passing by.
Be sure to learn his name who goes thereat.'
'Sir,' said this boy, 'there is no need of that. 10
One told me that two hours before ye came;
He was a mate of yours, by God's own name!
And suddenly tonight he was dispatched
As he lay drunk upon his bench outstretched.
There came a secret thief, men call him Death, 15
That in this country all the people slay'th;
And with his spear Death cleft his heart in twain,
And without speaking went his way again.
He hath slain a thousand in this pestilence;
And masters, ere ye meet his violence, 20
It would be well for you, and necessary,
To be forewarned of such an adversary;
Be ready now to meet him night or day.
My mother taught me thus; no more I'll say.'
'Now by St. Mary,' said the taverner, 25
'The child speaks truly. Death hath slain this year—
About a mile from here, in a great town—
Woman and man and child, servant and clown.

[1] boy, servant.

His dwelling must be in that town, I trow;
'Tis best to be forewarned of such a foe 30
Before ye meet with him and suffer harm.'
'Yea,' said this rioter, 'by God's own arm,
Is he so perilous a man to meet?
By God's bones, I shall seek him in the street
And in the byways, too, I make a vow! 35
Hearken, my mates, we three are one. And now
Let each of us hold up his hand to th'other,
And each of us become the other's brother;
And we will slay this faithless traitor Death.
He shall be slain, he that so many slay'th, 40
By God's own dignity, ere it be night.'
Together then these three their troth did plight,
To live and die each of them for the other,
As though he were by birth his very brother.
And up they rose, more drunk than they sat down, 45
And forth they started to the neighboring town
Of which the taverner had told before.
And many a grisly oath the comrades swore—
Christ's blessèd body they tore limb from limb—[1]
'Death shall be dead, if once they seize on him.' 50
When they had gone not fully half a mile,
Just as they would have stepped across a stile,
An old man and a poor with them did meet.
The revelers full meekly did he greet
And said, 'My lords, God keep you in His sight!' 55
The haughtiest rioter addressed the wight[2]:
'What, churlish fellow, with so ill a grace,
Why art thou muffled up except thy face?
Why liv'st so long and in such sorry plight?'
The old man looked at him with peering sight, 60
And answered him, 'Because nowhere I can—

[1] in profane swearing by parts of Christ's body.
[2] person, human being.

Though I should walk to India—find a man,
In village or in city, who'll engage
To change his youth with me for my old age.
And therefore must I keep my old age still 65
As long a time as it may be God's will.
Nor Death, alas! he will not take my life.
Thus walk I still, my heart in restless strife;
And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,
I knock my staff, at early hours and late, 70
And call to her, "Dear mother, let me in!
Lo, how I vanish, flesh and blood and skin!
Alas, when shall my bones be laid to rest?
Mother, with you I would exchange my chest
That in my chamber such a time hath been, 75
Yea, for a haircloth shroud to wrap me in!"
But still she will not do her son that grace,
And therefore pale and withered is my face.
But, sirs, in you 'tis not a courteous thing
To speak to an old man with mocking fling, 80
Unless he do you wrong in word or deed.
In Holy Writ ye for yourselves may read,
"In presence of a white-haired man, arise."
And therefore all of you I may advise
That ye should do no old man injury, 85
If ye would have men show you courtesy
In your old age, if ye so long abide.
Now God be with you, where ye walk or ride.
I must go thither where I have to go.'
'Nay, nay, old churl! By God, thou shalt not so,' 90
Cried out another rioter anon;
'Thou shalt not part so lightly, by Saint John!
Thou spakest now of that same traitor Death
That in this country all the people slay'th.
Hear thou my word, his spy as thou must be: 95
Tell where he is, or pay the penalty,

By God, and by the Holy Sacrament!
For truly thou art one of his assent
To slay young fellows such as we, thou thief!'
'Now, sirs,' said he, 'if ye are all so lief 100
To seek out Death, turn up this crooked way;
For in that grove I left him, truth to say,
Under a tree, and there he will abide.
Not for your boast against him will he hide.
See ye that oak? Right there ye shall him find. 105
God save you all, that ransomed lost mankind,
And better you!' Thus spake this agèd man;
And every one of the three revelers ran
Until they reached that tree, and there they found
Of good gold florins, finely coined and round, 110
Wellnigh eight bushels, as those scoundrels thought.
No longer after Death the comrades sought;
But each of them was gladdened by that sight,
Because the florins were so fair and bright.
They sat them down beside the precious hoard. 115
The worst among them uttered the first word.
'Brothers,' said he, 'give heed to what I say;
My head is shrewd, although I jest and play.
Fortune herself has given us this treasure
That we may live our lives in mirth and pleasure, 120
And lightly goes it, as 'twas lightly caught.
Eh! by God's precious dignity, who thought
This morning we would have so fair a grace?
Could ever this gold be carried from this place
Home to my house, or else to house of yours— 125
For well ye know that all this gold is ours—
Then were we in a high felicity.
But, truly, in the day it may not be;
For men would say that we were robbers bold,
And have us hanged for bearing our own gold. 130
This treasure must be carried off by night

As shrewdly as we can by clever sleight.
'Tis my advice, draw cuts among us all,
And see to whom the shortest cut will fall;
And he that draws the lot, with cheerful heart, 135
Shall hasten to the town to do his part
And bring us bread and wine in secret wise,
While two of us left here will guard our prize,
This gold. And if our comrade does not tarry,
When it is night we will this treasure carry, 140
By one accord, wherever we may list.'
One held the cuts for them within his fist,
And bade them draw and see where it should fall.
It fell unto the youngest of them all;
And toward the town he hurried off anon. 145
Accordingly, so soon as he was gone,
One of the two who stayed spoke to the other,
'Thou knowest well thou art my own sworn brother.
Thy profit I will counsel thee anon.
Our comrade, as thou knowest well, is gone; 150
And here is gold in such a quantity
To be apportioned out among us three.
But none the less, if I could make it true
That all should be divided 'twixt us two,
Would I not do a friendly turn for thee?' 155
The other said, 'I know not how't may be;
He knows we guard the treasure while we stay.
What shall we do? What ever can we say?'
'Shall't be a secret, then?' that rogue replied.
'I'll tell thee soon, if I may be thy guide, 160
What we shall do to bring our end about.'
'So I agree,' the other said; 'no doubt
I will not thee betray, as I am true.'
'Now,' quoth the first, 'thou knowest we are two,
And two are stronger than the other one. 165
Watch when he sits; as soon as that is done,

Arise, as though to grip with him in play,
And I shall stab him while he turns away
To wrestle with thee, thinking it in game;
And with thy dagger see thou do the same. 170
And then shall all this gold divided be,
My dearest friend, betwixt thyself and me;
And both of us may all our lusts fulfill
And play at dice as often as we will.'
And thus these scoundrel knaves provided well 175
To slay the third, as you have heard me tell.
The youngest, he that travelled to the town,
Oft in his heart revolving up and down
The beauty of those florins new and bright—
'O Lord,' quoth he, 'if so it were I might 180
Have all this treasure to myself alone,
No man that liveth now beneath the throne
Of God should live so merrily as I!'
And so at last the fiend, our enemy,
Put in his thought some poison to purvey 185
Wherewith his two companions he might slay,
Because the devil found him in such case
That he had leave to tempt his soul from grace;
For this was utterly his full intent
To slay them both, and never to repent. 190
And forth he goes, nor longer will he tarry,
Into the town, to an apothecary,
And earnestly entreated him to sell
Poison enough so he some rats might quell;
Besides, there was a polecat in his lane 195
That, as he said, his capons oft had slain.
Gladly he would revenge him, if he might,
On vermin that were ruining him by night.
The apothecary answered, 'This should serve;
A thing so strong, may God my soul preserve, 200
In all this world there is no living thing

Can eat or drink of this empoisoning—
Even the volume of a wheaten grain—
But he shall end his life in instant pain.
Yea, die he shall, and in a shorter while 205
Than thou wouldst take to walk a single mile,
This poison is so violent to withstand.'
The cursèd man has snatched it in his hand,
This poison in a box, and then he ran
Into the neighboring street, unto a man, 210
And borrowed from his shop large bottles three;
And in the two his poison lavished he.
A third he kept untouched for his own drink,
For all that night he made his plans to swink[1]
In bearing off the gold from out that place. 215
And when this reveler with sorry grace
Had filled his three large bottles up with wine,
Back to his mates he went with his design.
What need is there to moral on it more?
For just as they had planned his death before, 220
So did they slay the third, and that anon.
And when the deed was over, up spoke one,
'Now let us sit and drink, and make us merry,
And we will after this his body bury.'
And with that word he drank, it chanced that day, 225
From out a bottle where the poison lay
And gave it to the fellow at his side,
For which anon they both together died.
But Avicenna,[2] truly I suppose,
Never wrote book, nor chapter did he gloze,[3] 230
Which showed more signs of poison's deadly bane
Than had these rogues as they expired in pain.
And so they died who struck such murderous blows,
And so the crafty poisoner died as those.

[1] toil. [2] Arab physician (980–1037).
[3] comment upon, as with marginal notes.

The Modern Tale

The modern tale in verse is almost as various in form and subject as its authors are numerous. However, three principal tendencies may be charted:

1. The Romantic poets, although they usually adopted traditional forms such as the Spenserian stanza or the rime royal or the ottava rima, used narrative poetry as a means to self-expression. A narrative by Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, or Keats tells a story, but it serves even better to illustrate the author's philosophy of life and his conception of poetry. Quite characteristic of Coleridge is "Christabel," unfinished, and impressing the reader by its atmosphere and suggestiveness rather than by the incidents of the story. Burns, with the humorous realism of "Tam o' Shanter," and Scott, with his forthright love of story-telling, stand apart from their Romantic contemporaries.

2. The Victorian poets frequently retold old tales in order to reinterpret them. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* is more closely related to the thought of his age than to anything in the older Arthurian legends. Browning's longest verse narrative, "The Ring and the Book," is told, like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, by a number of speakers; but the tales composing it are all one story retold from different points of view, and the psychological portrayal of the narrators becomes—instead of an interesting setting, as in Chaucer—the primary purpose of the whole poem.

3. In contemporary narratives there has been some ef-

fort to revive the glamour of the past, some expression of subjective feeling, some reinterpretation of old stories in terms of modern thought. But the chief characteristic of contemporary narrative poetry is its realism. John Masefield, the outstanding narrative poet of our time, has written

> Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth,
> The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth;—
> Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and the scum of
> the earth.

It is interesting to compare Masefield's "Dauber" with Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Each poem tells a story of a sailor who rounds Cape Horn; each one is vividly descriptive and full of action; but the two narratives represent almost the opposite extremes of romance and realism in modern poetry. The realism of Robert Frost is less violent than that of Masefield, but it is equally devoid of heightening by legendary splendor.

Perhaps the most pervasive emotion in all modern poetry is the feeling of human sympathy. This is evident at once to any reader who compares the aristocratic and purely objective Arthurian romances with a democratic and intensely sympathetic poem such as "The Ovens." The doctrine of brotherly love is taught directly in some modern poems, such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "The Vision of Sir Launfal." More commonly the idea of human brotherhood is indirectly stated, as in "The Death of the Hired Man."

Perhaps the chief fault of modern narratives, as it is often a source of their greatest interest, is the tendency to overload the story with reflection, until it becomes "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" and loses "the

name of action." To escape this tendency modern poets have frequently adopted the swift-running ballad stanza, which still remains in many ways the best verse form in our language for simple narration.

Tam o' Shanter

A Tale

ROBERT BURNS

Of Brownyis and of Bogillis full is this buke.
GAWIN DOUGLAS

When chapman billies[1] leave the street,
And drouthy neibors neibors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
And folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousin at the nappy,[2] 5
And gettin fou and unco[3] happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps,[4] and stiles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame, 10
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter:
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses, 15
For honest men and bonie lasses.)

O Tam! had'st thou but been sae wise
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,[5]
A bletherin, blusterin, drunken blellum[6]; 20

[1] trading fellows. [2] ale. [3] wonderfully. [4] gaps (as in a wall).
[5] worthless fellow. [6] nonsense-babbler.

That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was na sober;
That ilka[1] melder wi' the miller,[2]
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig[3] was ca'd[4] a shoe on, 25
The smith and thee gat roarin fou on;
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesied, that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon; 30
Or catch't wi' warlocks[5] in the mirk,[6]
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,[7]
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthened sage advices, 35
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale:—Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Fast by an ingle,[8] bleezing finely,
Wi' reamin swats[9] that drank divinely; 40
And at his elbow, Souter[10] Johnie,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony:
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter; 45
And ay the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious
Wi' secret favors, sweet, and precious:
The souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus: 50
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

[1] every. [2] *melder . . . miller,* batch of grain taken to mill; grist. [3] horse. [4] driven. [5] wizards. [6] dark. [7] *gars me greet,* makes me weep. [8] fireplace. [9] brimful mugs of ale. [10] shoemaker.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy:
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure, 55
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure;
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed; 60
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts forever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form 65
Evanishing amid the storm.
Nae man can tether time or tide:
The hour approaches Tam maun[1] ride—
That hour, o' night's black arch the keystane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in; 70
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd; 75
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd:
That night, a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mear,[2] Meg,—
A better never lifted leg,— 80
Tam skelpit[3] on thro' dub[4] and mire,
Despising wind and rain and fire;
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet,

[1] must. [2] mare. [3] clattered. [4] pool.

Whiles glowrin round wi' prudent cares, 85
Lest bogles[1] catch him unawares.
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets[2] nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd[3]; 90
And past the birks[4] and meikle stane,[5]
Whare drucken[6] Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins,[7] and by the cairn,[8]
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,[9] 95
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole,
Near and more near the thunders roll; 100
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seemed in a bleeze[10]:
Thro' ilka bore[11] the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn! 105
What dangers thou can'st make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny[12] we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquebae[13] we'll face the devil!
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle.[14] 110
But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light;
And, wow! Tam saw an unco sight!

[1] hobgoblins. [2] owls. [3] smothered. [4] birch trees. [5] big stone. [6] drunken. [7] gorse. [8] a pile of stones. [9] above the spring. [10] blaze. [11] cranny. [12] two-penny ale. [13] whisky. [14] a small old coin; a copper.

Warlocks and witches in a dance; 115
Nae cotillon brent-new[1] frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels
Put life and mettle in their heels:
A winnock bunker[2] in the east,
There sat Auld Nick in shape o' beast; 120
A towzie tyke,[3] black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge;
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,[4]
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.[5]
Coffins stood round like open presses, 125
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantraip sleight[6]
Each in its cauld hand held a light,
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table 130
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns[7];
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae the rape[8]
Wi' his last gasp his gab[9] did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red-rusted; 135
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft; 140
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The piper loud and louder blew, 145
The dancers quick and quicker flew;

[1] brand-new. [2] window seat. [3] dog. [4] shrill. [5] rattle. [6] witchcraft magic. [7] irons. [8] rope. [9] mouth.

They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,[1]
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit[2]
And coost her duddies to the wark[3]
And linket[4] at it in her sark[5]! 150

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,[6]
A' plump and strapping in their teens!
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie[7] flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen[8]!—
Thir breeks o' mine,[9] my only pair, 155
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gien them aff my hurdies,[10]
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies[11]!
But withered beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie[12] hogs wad spean[13] a foal, 160
Lowping and flinging on a crummock,[14]
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam ken'd what was what fu' brawlie[15];
There was ae winsom wench and walie,[16]
That night enlisted in the core[17] 165
(Lang after ken'd on Carrick shore:
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,[18]
And kept the country-side in fear); 170
Her cutty[19] sark o' Paisley harn,[20]
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.[21]

[1] seized hands. [2] *ilka . . . reekit*, every old woman sweated and steamed. [3] *coost . . . wark*, cast off her garments to the work. [4] tripped. [5] shirt. [6] girls. [7] greasy. [8] seventeen hundred threads to the breadth. [9] these breeches of mine. [10] hips. [11] lasses. [12] ill-shaped. [13] wean (by disgust). [14] a staff with bent head. [15] well. [16] buxom. [17] company. [18] barley. [19] short. [20] coarse linen. [21] proud.

Ah! little kent thy reverend grannie, 175
That sark she coft[1] for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots[2] ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever graced a dance o' witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cow'r,
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r; 180
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jad she was and strang,)
And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een[3] enrich'd;
Even Satan glowr'd and fidg'd[4] fu' fain,[5] 185
And hotch'd[6] and blew wi' might and main:
Till first ae caper, syne[7] anither,
Tam tint[8] his reason a' thegither,
And roars out, 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
And in an instant all was dark: 190
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,[9]
When plundering herds assail their byke[10];
As open pussie's[11] mortal foes, 195
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud;
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch[12] skriech and hollo. 200

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin[13]!
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg, 205

[1] bought. [2] about three shillings and four pence in standard English money. [3] eyes. [4] fidgeted. [5] eagerly. [6] jerked. [7] then. [8] lost. [9] hurry. [10] hive. [11] hare's. [12] unearthly. [13] reward; originally, a prize from a fair.

And win the key-stane of the brig[1]:
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they dare na cross.
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient[2] a tail she had to shake! 210
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle[3];
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—
Ae spring brought aff her master hale, 215
But left behind her ain gray tail:
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed, 220
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys owre dear,
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mear.
[1791]

Michael

A Pastoral Poem

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,[4]
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.

[1] bridge. [2] devil. [3] intent.
[4] *ghyll*, or *gill*, a deep glen; sometimes a stream in such a ravine.

No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone 10
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by, 15
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside, 20
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved;—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills 25
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel 30
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same 35
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.

His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs, 45
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and oftentimes,
When others heeded not, He heard the South 50
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
'The winds are now devising work for me!' 55
And, truly, at all times, the storm that drives
The traveler to shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights. 60
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed 65
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory 70
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honorable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him 75
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years. 80
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form: this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest
It was because the other was at work. 85
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son, 90
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone, 95
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labor did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk, 100
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ 105
Their hands by the fire-side; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge, 110
That in our ancient uncouth country style

With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed 115
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps 120
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night 125
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighborhood,
And was a public symbol of the life 130
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake; 135
And from this constant light, so regular,
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years, 140
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all— 145

Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail. 150
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use 155
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love, 160
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door 165
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING[1] TREE, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade, 170
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts 175
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek

[1] Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.—Wordsworth.

Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut 180
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed 185
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe, 190
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights, 195
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came 200
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?
Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year, 205
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 210
In surety for his brother's son, a man

Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture, 215
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost. 220
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again, 225
And his heart failed him. 'Isabel,' said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
'I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours 230
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last 235
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but 240
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
'When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free; 245
He shall possess it, free as is the wind

That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go, 250
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where everyone is poor,
What can be gained?'
At this the old Man paused, 255
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence 260
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
A basket, which they filled with peddler's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy 265
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birthplace, built a chapel, floored
With marble which he sent from foreign lands. 270
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—'Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days has been meat and drink to me. 275
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth 280

Tomorrow, or the next day, or tonight:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go tonight.'

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long 285
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights 290
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, 'Thou must not go: 295
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die.'
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears, 300
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.
With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared 305
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith 310
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round;
Nor was there at that time on English land

A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel 315
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
'He shall depart tomorrow.' To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length 320
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.
  Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss, 325
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped, 330
And thus the old Man spake to him:—'My Son,
Tomorrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy. 335
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls 340
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds 345
Than when I heard thee by our own fire-side
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,

And in the open fields my life was passed 350
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou 355
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know.'
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, 'Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak. 360
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still 365
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loath
To give their bodies to the family mold. 370
I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened[1] when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more 375
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke, 380
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go.'
At this the old Man paused;

[1] mortgaged.

Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
'This was a work for us; and now, my Son, 385
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part; 390
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone, 395
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me 400
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—But, I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men 405
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
Mayst bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived, 410
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
When thou returnst, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate 415
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.'

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight 420
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy 425
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight. 430

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
'The prettiest letters that were ever seen.' 435
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour 440
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame 445
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart: 450
I have conversed with more than one who well

Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks 455
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time 460
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went, 465
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time, 470
He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand. 475
The Cottage which was named THE EVENING STAR
Is gone—the plowshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighborhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains 480
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.
[1800]

Christabel

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

[This poem, which Coleridge promised to complete in five parts (or four, according to his friend Gillman), was never finished. Part I, which is given here, is superior to Part II; the later parts would apparently have been inferior, if we may judge by the plot outlined by Gillman. Charles Lamb urged Coleridge to leave the poem unfinished; the poet's son Hartley declared that his father could never have ended it as well as he had begun it. The poem is a marvelous study in atmospheric background and in strange melodies, rather than part of a connected story.]

PART I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu-whit!—Tu-whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew. 5

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour; 10
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark. 15
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray: 20
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the woods so late, 25
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothèd knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away. 30

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree, 35
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.— 40
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air 45
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can, 50
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.
Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!

She folded her arms beneath her cloak, 55
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone: 60
The neck that made the white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair. 65
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

'Mary mother, save me now!'
Said Christabel, 'And who art thou?' 70
The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
'Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!' 75
Said Christabel, 'How camest thou here?'
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

'My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine: 80
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind, 85
And they rode furiously behind.

They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be; 90
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced, I wis[1])
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive. 95
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past, 100
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand,' thus ended she,
'And help a wretched maid to flee.'

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
And comforted fair Geraldine: 105
'O well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free 110
Home to your noble father's hall.'

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel: 115
'All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,

[1] *I wis*, I know well.

And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth, 120
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me.'

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight, 125
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main 130
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear, 135
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side,
'Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!' 140
'Alas, alas!' said Geraldine,
'I cannot speak for weariness.'
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old 145
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell 150
Beneath the eye of Christabel.

Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,[1]
Pass as lightly as you will! 155
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye, 160
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
'O softly tread,' said Christabel,
'My father seldom sleepeth well.' 165

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And jealous of the listening air
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room, 170
As still as death, with stifled breath!
And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air, 175
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain, 180
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

[1] always.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim. 185
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight.
Sank down upon the floor below.

'O weary lady, Geraldine, 190
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers.'

'And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?' 195
Christabel answered—'Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the gray-haired friar tell
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell 200
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!'
'I would,' said Geraldine, 'she were!'

But soon, with altered voice, said she—
'Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine! 205
I have power to bid thee flee.'
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she, 210
'Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me.'

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue— 215

'Alas!' said she, 'this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wildered you!'
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, ''Tis over now!'

Again the wild-flower wine she drank: 220
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countrée. 225

And thus the lofty lady spake—
'All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell, 230
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie.'

Quoth Christabel, 'So let it be!' 235
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro, 240
That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed, 245
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound

The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest, 250
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs; 255
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied, 260
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the Maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,
Ah wel-a-day!
And with low voice and doleful look 265
These words did say:
'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest tonight, and wilt know tomorrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow; 270
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heardst a low moaning, 275
And foundst a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.'

THE CONCLUSION TO PART I

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she 280
Was praying at the old oak tree.

Amid the jagged shadows
Of mossy leafless boughs,
Kneeling in the moonlight,
To make her gentle vows; 285
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, oh call it fair not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear, 290
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is— 295
O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild, 300
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine— 305
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, *tu-whoo! tu-whoo!*
Tu-whoo! tu-whoo! from wood and fell! 310

And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds— 315

Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess, 320
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.
And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet. 325
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere,
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call: 330
For the blue sky bends over all!
[1816]

The Prisoner of Chillon

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

[François Bonivard (1496?–1570), prior of St. Victor's Priory, near Geneva, was imprisoned by the Duke of Savoy for political reasons; he did not become a Protestant until after his release. For four years he was confined underground in the castle of Chillon, on the edge of Lake Geneva and just outside the city of Geneva. Byron's poem is largely imaginary, although based on Bonivard's life.]

I

My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears.
My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil, 5
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those

To whom the goodly earth and air
Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare. 10
But this was for my father's faith
I suffer'd chains and courted death;
That father perish'd at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake;
And for the same his lineal race 15
In darkness found a dwelling-place;
We were seven—who now are one,
  Six in youth, and one in age,
Finish'd as they had begun,
  Proud of Persecution's rage; 20
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have seal'd,
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied;
Three were in a dungeon cast, 25
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mold
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and gray,
Dim with a dull imprison'd ray, 30
A sunbeam which hath lost its way
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp.[1] 35
And in each pillar there is a ring,
  And in each ring there is a chain;
That iron is a cankering thing,
  For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away, 40
Till I have done with this new day,

[1] the will-o'-the-wisp.

Which now is painful to these eyes,
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years—I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score 45
When my last brother droop'd and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III

They chain'd us each to a column stone,
And we were three—yet, each alone;
We could not move a single pace, 50
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight.
And thus together—yet apart,
Fetter'd in hand, but join'd in heart, 55
'Twas still some solace, in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old, 60
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon stone,
A grating sound—not full and free 65
As they of yore were wont to be:
It might be fancy, but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest 70
I ought to do—and did—my best;
And each did well in his degree.

The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him, with eyes as blue as heaven— 75
For him my soul was sorely moved.
And truly might it be distress'd
To see such bird in such a nest;
For he was beautiful as day—
(When day was beautiful to me 80
As to young eagles, being free)—
A polar day, which will not see
A sunset till its summer's gone,
Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun: 85
And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for naught but others' ills;
And then they flow'd like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe 90
Which he abhorr'd to view below.

V

The other was as pure of mind,
But form'd to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood, 95
And perish'd in the foremost rank
With joy:—but not in chains to pine:
His spirit wither'd with their clank,
I saw it silently decline—
And so perchance in sooth did mine: 100
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.
He was a hunter of the hills,
Had follow'd there the deer and wolf;
To him this dungeon was a gulf, 105
And fetter'd feet the worst of ills.

VI

Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent 110
From Chillon's snow-white battlement
Which round about the wave enthralls:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave.
Below the surface of the lake[1] 115
The dark vault lies wherein we lay:
We heard it ripple night and day;
Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high 120
And wanton in the happy sky;
And then the very rock hath rock'd,
And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free. 125

VII

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food;
It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunters' fare, 130
And for the like had little care.
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captives' tears
Have moisten'd many a thousand years, 135
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den;

[1] This detail is not true to fact.

But what were these to us or him?
These wasted not his heart or limb;
My brother's soul was of that mold 140
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side;
But why delay the truth?—he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head, 145
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead,—
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died, and they unlock'd his chain,
And scoop'd for him a shallow grave 150
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begg'd them as a boon to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine—it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought, 155
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer;
They coldly laugh'd, and laid him there:
The flat and turfless earth above 160
The being we so much did love;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such murder's fitting monument!

VIII

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherish'd since his natal hour, 165
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyr'd father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be 170

Less wretched now, and one day free;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired—
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was wither'd on the stalk away. 175
Oh, God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood:—
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean 180
Strive with a swoll'n convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread:
But these were horrors—this was woe
Unmix'd with such—but sure and slow. 185
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender—kind,
And grieved for those he left behind;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom 190
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray;
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright; 195
And not a word of murmur, not
A groan o'er his untimely lot,—
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I was sunk in silence—lost 200
In this last loss, of all the most;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less.
I listen'd, but I could not hear— 205

I call'd, for I was wild with fear;
I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonishèd;
I call'd, and thought I heard a sound—
I burst my chain with one strong bound, 210
And rush'd to him:—I found him not,
I only stirr'd in this black spot,
I only lived, *I* only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;
The last, the sole, the dearest link 215
Between me and the eternal brink,
Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath—
My brothers—both had ceased to breathe: 220
I took that hand which lay so still,
Alas! my own was full as chill;
I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive—
A frantic feeling, when we know 225
That what we love shall ne'er be so.
    I know not why
    I could not die,
I had no earthly hope—but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death. 230

IX

What next befell me then and there
  I know not well—I never knew;
First came the loss of light, and air,
  And then of darkness too:
I had no thought, no feeling—none— 235
Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist;

For all was blank, and bleak, and gray;
It was not night—it was not day, 240
It was not even the dungeon-light
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness—without a place;
There were no stars, no earth, no time, 245
No check, no change, no good, no crime—
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless! 250

X

A light broke in upon my brain,—
  It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
  The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes 255
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery.
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track; 260
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before,
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came 265
That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,
  And tamer than upon the tree;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
  And seem'd to say them all for me! 270
I never saw its like before,

I ne'er shall see its likeness more:
It seem'd like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when 275
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
  Or broke its cage to perch on mine, 280
But knowing well captivity,
  Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in wingèd guise,
A visitant from Paradise;
For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while 285
Which made me both to weep and smile—
I sometimes deem'd that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 'twas mortal well I knew, 290
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone,—
Lone—as the corse within its shroud,
Lone—as a solitary cloud,
  A single cloud on a sunny day, 295
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
  When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI

A kind of change came in my fate, 300
My keepers grew compassionate;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was:—my broken chain

With links unfasten'd did remain, 305
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part;
And round the pillars one by one, 310
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed, 315
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crush'd heart fell blind and sick.

XII

I made a footing in the wall,
  It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all 320
  Who loved me in a human shape;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me:
No child, no sire, no kin had I,
No partner in my misery; 325
I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barr'd windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high, 330
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII

I saw them—and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high—their wide long lake below, 335
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;

I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channel'd rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-wall'd distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down. 340
And then there was a little isle,
Which in my very face did smile,
  The only one in view;
A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor, 345
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
  Of gentle breath and hue. 350
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seem'd joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seem'd to fly; 355
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode 360
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,
And yet my glance, too much opprest,
Had almost need of such a rest. 365

XIV

It might be months, or years, or days—
  I kept no count, I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
  And clear them of their dreary mote.

At last men came to set me free; 370
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where;
It was at length the same to me,
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
I learn'd to love despair.
And thus when they appear'd at last, 375
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage—and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home. 380
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watch'd them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place, 385
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell;
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends 390
To make us what we are:—even I
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.
[1816]

The Eve of St. Agnes

JOHN KEATS

[This tale is founded upon the superstition that on St. Agnes' Eve, the night before January 21, a young woman who fulfills certain conditions may see a vision of her future husband. According to tradition, the night is always very cold.]

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:

The Modern Tale

Numb were the Beadsman's[1] fingers, while he told 5
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man; 10
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meager, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails: 15
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue 20
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his death-bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among 25
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft, 30
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd where upon their heads the cornice rests, 35
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

[1] A pensioner, not necessarily a priest, employed to pray for his patron.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay 40
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare. 45

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright; 50
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline: 55
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier, 60
And back retir'd; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere;
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short: 65
The hallow'd hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,

Hoodwink'd[1] with fairy fancy; all amort,[2] 70
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,[3]
And all the bliss to be before tomorrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire 75
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen; 80
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes, 85
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul. 90

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland: 95
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, 'Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here tonight, the whole bloodthirsty race!

[1] blindfolded. [2] lifeless.
[3] On St. Agnes' Day two lambs were vowed to the saint, and their wool was woven by nuns into garments for priests.

'Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish[1] Hildebrand; 100
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away.'—'Ah, Gossip[2] dear, 105
We're safe enough; here in this armchair sit,
And tell me how'—'Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.'

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume; 110
And as she mutter'd 'Well-a—well-a-day!'
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
'Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,
'O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom 115
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

'St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve, 120
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjurer plays
This very night; good angels her deceive! 125
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve.'

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book, 130

[1] despicable.
[2] godmother, familiar acquaintance.

As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook[1]
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old. 135

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
'A cruel man and impious thou art: 140
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.'

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,' 145
Quoth Porphyro: 'O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears; 150
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears.'

'Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing, 155
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never miss'd.' Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing, 160
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

[1] Erroneously used here to mean "check."

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy 165
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd fairies pac'd the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met, 170
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.[1]

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame:
'All cates[2] and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame[3]
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare, 175
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.' 180

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
The Dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last, 185
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade, 190
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware:

[1] Merlin, the great magician, fell a victim to his own magic.
[2] delicacies. [3] A drum-shaped embroidery frame.

With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led 195
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd[1] and fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died: 200
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable,[2] or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side; 205
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass, 210
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings, 215
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules[3] on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest, 220
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven: Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint. 225

[1] frightened. [2] To speak would break the spell. [3] red (a term in heraldry).

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees: 230
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in seaweed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest, 235
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay.
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain; 240
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray[1];
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress, 245
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness, 250
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

Then by the bedside, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half-anguish'd, threw thereon 255
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—

[1] Perhaps closed tightly, as a prayer book would be in a pagan land.

O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:— 260
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd; 265
With jellies soother[1] than the creamy curd,
And lucent sirups, tinct[2] with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon. 270

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.— 275
'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite[3]:
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm 280
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies: 285
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

[1] smoother. [2] flavored.
[3] literally, hermit; here, worshiper or consecrated servant.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be, 290
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans merci"[1]:
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly 295
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd 300
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep,
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye, 305
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

'Ah, Porphyro!' said she, 'but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tunable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear: 310
How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.' 315

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;

[1] "The beautiful lady without pity."

Into her dream he melted, as the rose 320
Blendeth its odor with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes: St. Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet: 325
'This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!'
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
'No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring? 330
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing.'

'My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest? 335
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famish'd pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest 340
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

'Hark! 'tis an elfin storm from fairy land,
Of haggard seeming,[1] but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;— 345
The bloated wassailers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drown'd all in Rhenish[2] and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be, 350
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

[1] wild appearance. [2] Rhine wine.

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.— 355
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor. 360

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide,
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide, 365
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: aye, ages long ago 370
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old 375
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meager face deform[1];
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.
[1820]

[1] deformed, twisted awry.

From Dauber[1]

JOHN MASEFIELD

VI

[The extract is from a long story of a young artist who, ambitious to become a painter of the sea, shipped "around the Horn," being rated as ship's painter, and working at his drawings and sketches in odd hours. Because of both occupations the crew called him "Dauber."]

All through the windless night the clipper rolled
In a great swell with oily gradual heaves
Which rolled her down until her time-bells tolled,
Clang, and the weltering water moaned like beeves.
The thundering rattle of slatting shook the sheaves, 5
Startles of water made the swing ports gush,
The sea was moaning and sighing and saying 'Hush!'

It was all black and starless. Peering down
Into the water, trying to pierce the gloom,
One saw a dim, smooth, oily glitter of brown 10
Heaving and dying away and leaving room
For yet another. Like the march of doom
Came those great powers of marching silences;
Then fog came down, dead-cold, and hid the seas.

They set the Dauber to the foghorn. There 15
He stood upon the poop, making to sound
Out of the pump the sailor's nasal blare,
Listening lest ice should make the note resound.
She bayed there like a solitary hound
Lost in a covert; all the watch she bayed. 20
The fog, come closelier down, no answer made.

[1] From *The Story of a Round-House and Other Poems*, by John Masefield. Copyright, 1913, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

Denser it grew, until the ship was lost.
The elemental hid her; she was merged
In mufflings of dark death, like a man's ghost,
New to the change of death, yet thither urged. 25
Then from the hidden waters something surged—
Mournful, despairing, great, greater than speech,
A noise like one slow wave on a still beach.

Mournful, and then again mournful, and still
Out of the night that mighty voice arose; 30
The Dauber at his foghorn felt the thrill.
Who rode that desolate sea? What forms were those?
Mournful, from things defeated, in the throes
Of memory of some conquered hunting-ground,
Out of the night of death arose the sound. 35

'Whales!' said the Mate. They stayed there all night long
Answering the horn. Out of the night they spoke,
Defeated creatures who had suffered wrong,
But were still noble underneath the stroke.
They filled the darkness when the Dauber woke; 40
The men came peering to the rail to hear,
And the sea sighed, and the fog rose up sheer.

A wall of nothing at the world's last edge,
Where no life came except defeated life.
The Dauber felt shut in within a hedge, 45
Behind which form was hidden and thought was rife,
And that a blinding flash, a thrust, a knife
Would sweep the hedge away and make all plain,
Brilliant beyond all words, blinding the brain.

So the night passed, but then no morning broke— 50
Only a something showed that night was dead.
A sea-bird, cackling like a devil, spoke,
And the fog drew away and hung like lead.

Like mighty cliffs it shaped, sullen and red;
Like glowering gods at watch it did appear, 55
And sometimes drew away, and then drew near.

Like islands, and like chasms, and like hell,
But always mighty and red, gloomy and ruddy,
Shutting the visible sea in like a well;
Slow heaving in vast ripples, blank and muddy, 60
Where the sun should have risen it streaked bloody.
The day was still-born; all the sea-fowl scattering
Splashed the still water, mewing, hovering, clattering.

Then Polar snow came down little and light,
Till all the sky was hidden by the small, 65
Most multitudinous drift of dirty white
Tumbling and wavering down and covering all—
Covering the sky, the sea, the clipper tall,
Furring the ropes with white, casing the mast,
Coming on no known air, but blowing past. 70

And all the air seemed full of gradual moan,
As though in those cloud-chasms the horns were blowing
The mort for gods cast out and overthrown,
Or for the eyeless sun plucked out and going.
Slow the low gradual moan came in the snowing; 75
The Dauber felt the prelude had begun.
The snowstorm fluttered by; he saw the sun

Show and pass by, gleam from one towering prison
Into another, vaster and more grim,
Which in dull crags of darkness had arisen 80
To muffle-to a final door on him.
The gods upon the dull crags lowered dim,
The pigeons chattered, quarreling in the track.
In the south-west the dimness dulled to black.

Then came the cry of 'Call all hands on deck!' 85
The Dauber knew its meaning; it was come:
Cape Horn, that tramples beauty into wreck,
And crumples steel and smites the strong man dumb.
Down clattered flying kites and staysails: some
Sang out in quick, high calls: the fairleads skirled, 90
And from the south-west came the end of the world.

'Caught in her ball-dress,' said the Bosun, hauling;
'Lee-ay, lee-ay!' quick, high, came the men's call;
It was all wallop of sails and startled calling.
'Let fly!' 'Let go!' 'Clew up!' and 'Let go all!' 95
'Now up and make them fast!' 'Here, give us a haul!'
'Now up and stow them! Quick! By God! we're done!'
The blackness crunched all memory of the sun.

'Up!' said the Mate. 'Mizzen top-gallants. Hurry!'
The Dauber ran, the others ran, the sails 100
Slatted and shook; out of the black a flurry
Whirled in fine lines, tattering the edge to trails.
Painting and art and England were old tales
Told in some other life to that pale man,
Who struggled with white fear and gulped and ran. 105

He struck a ringbolt in his haste and fell—
Rose, sick with pain, half-lamed in his left knee;
He reached the shrouds where clambering men pell-mell
Hustled each other up and cursed him; he
Hurried aloft with them: then from the sea 110
Came a cold, sudden breath that made the hair
Stiff on the neck, as though Death whispered there.

A man below him punched him in the side.
'Get up, you Dauber, or let me get past.'
He saw the belly of the skysail skied, 115
Gulped, and clutched tight, and tried to go more fast.

Sometimes he missed his ratline and was grassed,
Scraped his shin raw against the rigid line.
The clamberers reached the futtock-shrouds' incline.

Cursing they came; one, kicking out behind, 120
Kicked Dauber in the mouth, and one below
Punched at his calves; the futtock-shrouds inclined
It was a perilous path for one to go.
'Up, Dauber, up!' A curse followed a blow.
He reached the top and gasped, then on, then on. 125
And one voice yelled 'Let go!' and one 'All gone!'

Fierce clamberers, some in oilskins, some in rags,
Hustling and hurrying up, up the steep stairs.
Before the windless sails were blown to flags,
And whirled like dirty birds athwart great airs, 130
Ten men in all, to get this mast of theirs
Snugged to the gale in time. 'Up! Damn you, run!'
The mizzen topmast head was safely won.

'Lay out!' the Bosun yelled. The Dauber laid
Out on the yard, gripping the yard, and feeling 135
Sick at the mighty space of air displayed
Below his feet, where mewing birds were wheeling.
A giddy fear was on him; he was reeling.
He bit his lip half through, clutching the jack.
A cold sweat glued the shirt upon his back. 140

The yard was shaking, for a brace was loose.
He felt that he would fall; he clutched, he bent,
Clammy with natural terror to the shoes
While idiotic promptings came and went.
Snow fluttered on a wind-flaw and was spent; 145
He saw the water darken. Someone yelled,
'Frap it;[1] don't stay to furl! Hold on!' He held.

[1] 'Bind it down.'

Darkness came down—half darkness—in a whirl;
The sky went out, the waters disappeared.
He felt a shocking pressure of blowing hurl 150
The ship upon her side. The darkness speared
At her with wind; she staggered, she careered,
Then down she lay. The Dauber felt her go;
He saw his yard tilt downwards. Then the snow

Whirled all about—dense, multitudinous, cold— 155
Mixed with the wind's one devilish thrust and shriek,
Which whiffled out men's tears, deafened, took hold,
Flattening the flying drift against the cheek.
The yards buckled and bent, man could not speak.
The ship lay on her broadside; the wind's sound 160
Had devilish malice at having got her downed.

. . . . . .

How long the gale had blown he could not tell,
Only the world had changed, his life had died.
A moment now was everlasting hell.
Nature an onslaught from the weather side, 165
A withering rush of death, a frost that cried,
Shrieked, till he withered at the heart; a hail
Plastered his oilskins with an icy mail.

'Cut!'[1] yelled his mate. He looked—the sail was gone,
Blown into rags in the first furious squall; 170
The tatters drummed the devil's tattoo. On
The buckling yard a block thumped like a mall.
The ship lay—the sea smote her, the wind's bawl
Came, 'loo, loo, loo!' The devil cried his hounds
On to the poor spent stag strayed in his bounds. 175

'Cut! Ease her!' yelled his mate; the Dauber heard.
His mate wormed up the tilted yard and slashed,
A rag of canvas skimmed like a darting bird.

[1] 'Cut the sail loose!'

The snow whirled, the ship bowed to it, the gear lashed,
The sea-tops were cut off and flung down smashed; 180
Tatters of shouts were flung, the rags of yells—
And *clang*, *clang*, *clang*, below beat the two bells.

'O God!' the Dauber moaned. A roaring rang,
Blasting the royals like a cannonade;
The backstays parted with a cracking clang, 185
The upper spars were snapped like twigs decayed—
Snapped at their heels, their jagged splinters splayed,
Like white and ghastly hair erect with fear.
The Mate yelled, 'Gone, by God, and pitched them clear!'

'Up!' yelled the Bosun; 'up and clear the wreck!' 190
The Dauber followed where he led: below
He caught one giddy glimpsing of the deck
Filled with white water, as though heaped with snow.
He saw the streamers of the rigging blow
Straight out like pennons from the splintered mast, 195
Then, all sense dimmed, all was an icy blast

Roaring from nether hell and filled with ice,
Roaring and crashing on the jerking stage,
An utter bridle given to utter vice,
Limitless power mad with endless rage 200
Withering the soul; a minute seemed an age.
He clutched and hacked at ropes, at rags of sail,
Thinking that comfort was a fairy-tale

Told long ago—long, long ago—long since
Heard of in other lives—imagined, dreamed— 205
There where the basest beggar was a prince
To him in torment where the tempest screamed,
Comfort and warmth and ease no longer seemed
Things that a man could know: soul, body, brain,
Knew nothing but the wind, the cold, the pain. 210

'Leave that!' the Bosun shouted; 'Crojick[1] save!'
The splitting crojick, not yet gone to rags,
Thundered below, beating till something gave,
Bellying between its buntlines into bags. 214
Some birds were blown past, shrieking: dark, like shags,
Their backs seemed, looking down. 'Leu, leu!' they cried.
The ship lay, the seas thumped her; she had died.

They reached the crojick yard, which buckled, buckled
Like a thin whalebone to the topsail's strain.
They laid upon the yard and heaved and knuckled, 220
Pounding the sail, which jangled and leapt again.
It was quite hard with ice, its rope like chain,
Its strength like seven devils; it shook the mast.
They cursed and toiled and froze: a long time passed.

Two hours passed, then a dim lightening came. 225
Those frozen ones upon the yard could see
The mainsail and the foresail still the same,
Still battling with the hands and blowing free,
Rags tattered where the staysails used to be.
The lower topsails stood; the ship's lee deck 230
Seethed with four feet of water filled with wreck.

An hour more went by; the Dauber lost
All sense of hands and feet, all sense of all
But of a wind that cut him to the ghost,
And of a frozen fold he had to haul, 235
Of heavens that fell and never ceased to fall,
And ran in smoky snatches along the sea,
Leaping from crest to wave-crest, yelling. He

Lost sense of time; no bells went, but he felt
Ages go over him. At last, at last 240
They frapped the cringled crojick's icy pelt;
In frozen bulge and bunt they made it fast.

[1] lowest sail of the mizzen mast.

Then, scarcely live, they laid in to the mast.
The Captain's speaking trumpet gave a blare,
'Make fast the topsail, Mister, while you're there.' 245

Some seamen cursed, but up they had to go—
Up to the topsail yard to spend an hour
Stowing a topsail in a blinding snow,
Which made the strongest man among them cower.
More men came up, the fresh hands gave them power, 250
They stowed the sail; then with a rattle of chain
One half the crojick burst its bonds again.

. . . . . .

They stowed the sail, frapping it round with rope,
Leaving no surface for the wind, no fold,
Then down the weather shrouds, half dead, they grope; 255
That struggle with the sail had made them old.
They wondered if the crojick furl would hold.
'Lucky,' said one, 'it didn't spring the spar.'
'Lucky!' the Bosun said, 'Lucky! We are!

'She came within two shakes of turning top 260
Or stripping all her shroud-screws, that first quiff.
Now fish those wash-deck buckets out of the slop.
Here's Dauber says he doesn't like Cape Stiff.
This isn't wind, man, this is only a whiff.
Hold on, all hands, hold on!' a sea, half seen, 265
Paused, mounted, burst, and filled the main-deck green.

The Dauber felt a mountain of water fall.
It covered him deep, deep, he felt it fill,
Over his head, the deck, the fife-rails, all,
Quieting the ship, she trembled and lay still. 270
Then with a rush and shatter and clanging shrill
Over she went; he saw the water cream
Over the bitts; he saw the half-deck stream.

Then in the rush he swirled, over she went;
Her lee-rail dipped, he struck, and something gave; 275
His legs went through a port as the roll spent;
She paused, then rolled, and back the water drave.
He drifted with it as a part of the wave,
Drowning, half-stunned, exhausted, partly frozen,
He struck the booby hatchway; then the Bosun 280

Leaped, seeing his chance, before the next sea burst,
And caught him as he drifted, seized him, held,
Up-ended him against the bitts, and cursed.
'This ain't the George's Swimming Baths,'[1] he yelled;
'Keep on your feet!' Another gray-back felled 285
The two together, and the Bose, half-blind,
Spat: 'One's a joke,' he cursed, 'but two's unkind.'

'Now, damn it, Dauber!' said the Mate. 'Look out,
Or you'll be over the side!' The water freed;
Each clanging freeing-port became a spout. 290
The men cleared up the decks as there was need.
The Dauber's head was cut, he felt it bleed
Into his oilskins as he clutched and coiled.
Water and sky were devils' brews which boiled, 294

Boiled, shrieked, and glowered; but the ship was saved.
Snugged safely down, though fourteen sails were split.
Out of the dark a fiercer fury raved.
The gray-backs died and mounted, each crest lit
With a white toppling gleam that hissed from it
And slid, or leaped, or ran with whirls of cloud, 300
Mad with inhuman life that shrieked aloud.

The watch was called; Dauber might go below.
'Splice the main brace!'[2] the Mate called. All laid aft
To get a gulp of momentary glow

[1] Swimming pools, near the Liverpool landing stage.
[2] A sailor's expression for drinking strong liquor.

As some reward for having saved the craft. 305
The steward ladled mugs, from which each quaff'd
Whisky, with water, sugar, and lime-juice, hot,
A quarter of a pint each made the tot.

Beside the lamp-room door the steward stood
Ladling it out, and each man came in turn, 310
Tipped his sou'wester, drank it, grunted 'Good!'
And shambled forward, letting it slowly burn.
When all were gone the Dauber lagged astern,
Torn by his frozen body's lust for heat,
The liquor's pleasant smell, so warm, so sweet, 315

And by a promise long since made at home
Never to taste strong liquor. Now he knew
The worth of liquor; now he wanted some.
His frozen body urged him to the brew;
Yet it seemed wrong, an evil thing to do 320
To break that promise. 'Dauber,' said the Mate,
'Drink, and turn in, man; why the hell d'ye wait?'

'Please, sir, I'm temperance.' 'Temperance are you, hey?
That's all the more for me! So you're for slops?
I thought you'd had enough slops for today. 325
Go to your bunk and ease her when she drops.
And—damme, steward! you brew with too much hops!
Stir up the sugar, man!—and tell your girl
How kind the Mate was teaching you to furl.'

Then the Mate drank the remnants, six men's share, 330
And ramped into his cabin, where he stripped
And danced unclad, and was uproarious there.
In waltzes with the cabin cat he tripped,
Singing in tenor clear that he was pipped—
That 'he who strove the tempest to disarm, 335
Must never first embrail the lee yard-arm,'[1]

[1] A quotation from Falconer's "Shipwreck" (1762).

And that his name was Ginger. Dauber crept
Back to the round-house, gripping by the rail.
The wind howled by; the passionate water leapt;
The night was all one roaring with the gale. 340
Then at the door he stopped, uttering a wail;
His hands were perished numb and blue as veins,
He could not turn the knob for both the Spains.

A hand came shuffling aft, dodging the seas,
Singing 'her nut-brown hair' between his teeth; 345
Taking the ocean's tumult at his ease
Even when the wash about his thighs did seethe.
His soul was happy in its happy sheath;
'What, Dauber, won't it open? Fingers cold?
You'll talk of this time, Dauber, when you're old';

He flung the door half open, and a sea 351
Washed them both in, over the splashboard, down;
'You silly, salt miscarriage!' sputtered he.
'Dauber, pull out the plug before we drown!
That's spoiled my laces and my velvet gown. 355
Where is the plug?' Groping in pitch dark water,
He sang between his teeth "The Farmer's Daughter."

It was pitch dark within there; at each roll
The chests slid to the slant; the water rushed,
Making full many a clanging tin pan bowl 360
Into the black below-bunks as it gushed.
The dog-tired men slept through it; they were hushed.
The water drained, and then with matches damp
The man struck heads off till he lit the lamp.

'Thank you,' the Dauber said; the seaman grinned. 365
'This is your first foul weather?' 'Yes.' 'I thought
Up on the yard you hadn't seen much wind.
Them's rotten sea-boots, Dauber, that you brought.
Now I must cut on deck before I'm caught.'

He went; the lamp-flame smoked; he slammed the door;
A film of water loitered across the floor. 371

The Dauber watched it come and watched it go;
He had had revelation of the lies
Cloaking the truth men never choose to know;
He could bear witness now and cleanse their eyes. 375
He had beheld in suffering; he was wise;
This was the sea, this searcher of the soul—
This never-dying shriek fresh from the Pole.

He shook with cold; his hands could not undo
His oilskin buttons, so he shook and sat, 380
Watching his dirty fingers, dirty blue,
Hearing without the hammering tackle slat,
Within, the drops from dripping clothes went pat,
Running in little patters, gentle, sweet,
And 'Ai, ai!' went the wind, and the seas beat. 385

His bunk was sopping wet; he clambered in.
None of his clothes were dry; his fear recurred.
Cramps bunched the muscles underneath his skin.
The great ship rolled until the lamp was blurred.
He took his Bible and tried to read a word; 390
Trembled at going aloft again, and then
Resolved to fight it out and show it to men.

Faces recurred, fierce memories of the yard,
The frozen sail, the savage eyes, the jests,
The oaths of one great seaman, syphilis-scarred, 395
The tug of leeches jammed beneath their chests,
The buntlines bellying bunts out into breasts.
The deck so desolate-gray, the sky so wild.
He fell asleep, and slept like a young child.

But not for long; the cold awoke him soon, 400
The hot-ache and the skin-cracks and the cramp,

The seas thundering without, the gale's wild tune,
The sopping misery of the blankets damp.
A speaking-trumpet roared; a sea-boot's stamp
Clogged at the door. A man entered to shout: 405
'All hands on deck! Arouse here! Tumble out!'

The caller raised the lamp; his oilskins clicked
As the thin ice upon them cracked and fell.
'Rouse out!' he said. 'This lamp is frozen-wick'd.
Rouse out!' His accent deepened to a yell. 410
'We're among ice; it's blowing up like hell.
We're going to hand both topsails. Time, I guess,
We're sheeted up. Rouse out! Don't stay to dress!'

'Is it cold on deck?' said the Dauber. 'Is it cold?
We're sheeted up, I tell you, inches thick! 415
The fo'c'sle's like a wedding-cake, I'm told.
Now tumble out, my sons; on deck here, quick!
Rouse out, away, and come and climb the stick.
I'm going to call the half-deck. Bosun! Hey!
Both topsails coming in. Heave out! Away!' 420

He went; the Dauber tumbled from his bunk,
Clutching the side. He heard the wind go past,
Making the great ship wallow as if drunk.
There was a shocking tumult up the mast.
'This is the end,' he muttered, 'come at last! 425
I've got to go aloft, facing this cold.
I can't. I can't. I'll never keep my hold.

'I cannot face the topsail yard again.
I never guessed what misery it would be.'
The cramps and hot-ache made him sick with pain. 430
The ship stopped suddenly from a devilish sea,
Then, with a triumph of wash, a rush of glee,
The door burst in, and in the water rolled,
Filling the lower bunks, black, creaming, cold.

The lamp sucked out. 'Wash!' went the water back,
Then in again, flooding; the Bosun swore. 436
'You useless thing! You Dauber! You lee slack!
Get out, you heekapoota! Shut the door!
You coo-ilyaira, what are you waiting for?
Out of my way, you thing—you useless thing!' 440
He slammed the door indignant, clanging the ring.

And then he lit the lamp, drowned to the waist;
'Here's a fine house! Get at the scupper-holes'—
He bent against it as the water raced—
'And pull them out to leeward when she rolls. 445
They say some kinds of landsmen don't have souls.
I well believe. A Port Mahon baboon
Would make more soul than you got with a spoon.'

Down in the icy water Dauber groped
To find the plug; the racing water sluiced 450
Over his head and shoulders as she sloped.
Without, judged by the sound, all hell was loosed.
He felt cold Death about him tightly noosed.
That Death was better than the misery there
Iced on the quaking foothold high in air. 455

And then the thought came: 'I'm a failure. All
My life has been a failure. They were right.
It will not matter if I go and fall;
I should be free then from this hell's delight.
I'll never paint. Best let it end tonight. 460
I'll slip over the side. I've tried and failed.'
So in the ice-cold in the night he quailed.

Death would be better, death, than this long hell
Of mockery and surrender and dismay—
This long defeat of doing nothing well, 465
Playing the part too high for him to play.
'O Death! who hides the sorry thing away,

Take me; I've failed. I cannot play these cards.'
There came a thundering from the topsail yards.

And then he bit his lips, clenching his mind, 470
And staggered out to muster, beating back
The coward frozen self of him that whined.
Come what cards might he meant to play the pack.
'Ai!' screamed the wind; the topsail sheet went clack;
Ice filled the air with spikes; the gray-backs burst. 475
'Here's Dauber,' said the Mate, 'on deck the first.

'Why, holy sailor, Dauber, you're a man!
I took you for a soldier.[1] Up now, come!'
Up on the yards already they began
That battle with a gale which strikes men dumb. 480
The leaping topsail thundered like a drum.
The frozen snow beat in the face like shots.
The wind spun whipping wave-crests into clots.

So up upon the topsail yard again,
In the great tempest's fiercest hour, began 485
Probation to the Dauber's soul, of pain
Which crowds a century's torment in a span.
For the next month the ocean taught this man,
And he, in that month's torment, while she wested,
Was never warm nor dry, nor full nor rested. 490

But still it blew, or, if it lulled, it rose
Within the hour and blew again; and still
The water as it burst aboard her froze.
The wind blew off an ice-field, raw and chill,
Daunting man's body, tampering with his will; 495
But after thirty days a ghostly sun
Gave sickly promise that the storms were done.
[1912]

[1] shirker.

The Ovens[1]

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

He trailed along the cinder-track
Beside the sleek canal, whose black
Cold, slinking waters shivered back
Each frosty spark of starry light;
And each star pricked, an icy pin, 5
Through his old jacket worn and thin:
The raw wind rasped his shrinking skin
As if stark naked to its bite;
Yet, cutting through him like a knife,
It would not cut the thread of life; 10
But only turned his feet to stones
With red-hot soles, that weighed like lead
In his old broken boots. His head,
Sunk low upon his sunken chest,
Was but a burning, icy ache 15
That strained a skull which would not break
To let him tumble down to rest.
He felt the cold stars in his bones:
And only wished that he were dead,
With no curst searching wind to shred 20
The very flesh from off his bones—
No wind to whistle through his bones,
His naked, icy, burning bones:
When, looking up, he saw, ahead,
The far coke-ovens' glowing light 25
That burnt a red hole in the night.
And but to snooze beside that fire
Was all the heaven of his desire . . .
To tread no more this cursed track
Of crunching cinders, through a black 30

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. Copyright, 1917, by The Macmillan Company Reprinted by permission.

And blasted world of cinder-heaps,
Beside a sleek canal that creeps
Like crawling ice through every bone,
Beneath the cruel stars, alone
With this hell-raking wind that sets 35
The cold teeth rattling castanets . . .
Yea, heaven, indeed, that core of red
In night's black heart that seemed quite dead.
Though still far off, the crimson glow
Through his chilled veins began to flow, 40
And fill his shriveled heart with heat;
And, as he dragged his senseless feet,
That lagged as though to hold him back
In cold, eternal hell of black,
With heaven before him, blazing red, 45
The set eyes staring in his head
Were held by spell of fire quite blind
To that black world that fell behind,
A cindery wilderness of death;
As he drew slowly near and nearer, 50
And saw the ovens glowing clearer—
Low-domed and humming hives of heat—
And felt the blast of burning breath
That quivered from each white-hot brick:
Till, blinded by the blaze, and sick 55
He dropped into a welcome seat
Of warm white ashes, sinking low
To soak his body in the glow
That shot him through with prickling pain,
An eager agony of fire, 60
Delicious after the cold ache,
And scorched his tingling, frosted skin.
Then gradually the anguish passed;
And blissfully he lay, at last,
Without an unfulfilled desire, 65

His grateful body drinking in
Warm, blessed, snug forgetfulness.
And yet, with staring eyes awake,
As though no drench of heat could slake
His thirst for fire, he watched a red 70
Hot eye that burned within a chink
Between the bricks: while overhead
The quivering stream of hot, gold air
Surged up to quench the cold starlight.
His brain, too numbed and dull to think 75
Throughout the day, in that fierce glare
Awoke, at last, with startled stare
Of pitiless, insistent sight
That stript the stark, mean, bitter strife
Of his poor, broken, wasted life, 80
Crippled from birth, and struggling on,
The last, least shred of hope long gone,
To some unknown, black, bitter end.
But, even as he looked, his brain
Sank back to sightless sloth again; 85
Then, all at once, he seemed to choke;
And knew it was the stealthy stife
And deadly fume of burning coke
That filled his lungs, and seemed to soak
Through every pore, until the blood 90
Grew thick and heavy in his veins,
And he could scarcely draw a breath.
He lay, and murmured drowsily,
With closing eyes: 'If this be death,
It's snug and easy . . . let it come . . . 95
For life is cold and hard . . . the flood
Is rising with the heavy rains
That pour and pour . . . that damned old drum,
Why ever can't they let it be . . .
Beat-beating, beating, beating, beat . . .' 100

Then, suddenly, he sat upright,
For, close behind him in the night,
He heard a breathing loud and deep,
And caught a whiff of burning leather.
He shook himself alive, and turned; 105
And on a heap of ashes white,
O'ercome by the full blast of heat,
Where fieriest the dread blaze burned,
He saw a young girl stretched in sleep.
He sat awhile with heavy gaze 110
Fixed on her in a dull amaze,
Until he saw her scorched boots smoking:
Then, whispering huskily: 'She's dying,
While I look on and watch her choking!'
He roused, and pulled himself together: 115
And rose, and went where she was lying:
And, bending o'er the senseless lass,
In his weak arms he lifted her;
And bore her out beyond the glare,
Beyond the stealthy, stifling gas, 120
Into the fresh and eager air:
And laid her gently on the ground
Beneath the cold and starry sky:
And did his best to bring her round;
Though still, for all that he could try, 125
She seemed, with each deep-laboring breath
Just brought up on the brink of death.
He sought, and found an icy pool,
Though he had but a cap to fill,
And bathed her hands and face, until 130
The troubled breath was quieter,
And her flushed forehead felt quite cool:
And then he saw an eyelid stir;
And shivering she sat up at last,
And looked about her sullenly. 135

'I'm cold . . . I'm mortal cold,' she said:
'What call had you to waken me?
I was so warm and happy, dead . . .
And still those staring stars!' Her head
Dropt in her hands: and thick and fast 140
The tears came with a heavy sobbing.
He stood quite helpless while she cried;
And watched her shaken bosom throbbing
With passionate, wild, weak distress,
Till it was spent. And then she dried 145
Her eyes upon her singed black dress;
Looked up, and saw him standing there,
Wondering, and more than half-afraid.
But now, the nipping, hungry air
Took hold of her, and struck fear dead. 150
She only felt the starving sting
That must, at any price, be stayed;
And cried out: 'I am famishing!'
Then from his pocket he took bread
That he had been too weak and sick 155
To eat o'ernight: and eager-eyed,
She took it timidly; and said:
'I have not tasted food two days.'
And, as he waited by her side,
He watched her with a quiet gaze; 160
And saw her munch the broken crust
So gladly, seated in the dust
Of that black desert's bitter night,
Beneath the freezing stars, so white
And hunger-pinched: and at the sight 165
Keen pity touched him to the quick;
Although he never said a word,
Till she had finished every crumb.
And then he led her to a seat
A little closer to the heat, 170

But well beyond the deadly stife.
And in the ashes, side by side,
They sat together, dazed and dumb,
With eyes upon the ovens' glare,
Each looking nakedly on life. 175
And then, at length, she sighed, and stirred,
Still staring deep and dreamy-eyed
Into the whitening, steady glow.
With jerky, broken words and slow,
And biting at her finger-ends, 180
She talked at last: and spoke out all
Quite open-heartedly, as though
There were not any stranger there—
The fire and he, both bosom-friends.
She'd left her home three months ago— 185
She, country-born and country-bred,
Had got the notion in her head
That she'd like city-service best . . .
And so no country place could please . . .
And she had worried without rest 190
Until, at last, she got her ends;
And, wiser than her folk and friends,
She left her home among the trees . . .
The trees grew thick for miles about
Her father's house . . . the forest spread 195
As far as ever you could see . . .
And it was green, in Summer, green . . .
Since she had left her home, she'd seen
No greenness could compare with it . . .
And everything was fresh and clean, 200
And not all smutched and smirched with smoke . . .
They burned no sooty coal and coke,
But only wood-logs, ash and oak . . .
And by the fire at night they'd sit . . .
Ah! wouldn't it be rare and good 205

To smell the sappy, sizzling wood,
Once more; and listen to the stream
That runs just by the garden-gate . . .
And often, in a Winter spate,
She'd wakened from a troubled dream, 210
And lain in bed, and heard it roar;
And quaked to hear it, as a child . . .
It seemed so angry, and so wild—
Just mad to sweep the house away!
And now, it was three months or more 215
Since she had heard it, on the day . . .
The day she left . . . and Michael stood . . .
He was a woodman, too, and he
Worked with her father in the wood . . .
And wanted her, she knew . . . but she 220
Was proud, and thought herself too good
To marry any country lad . . .
'Twas queer to think she'd once been proud—
And such a little while ago—
A beggar, wolfing crusts! . . . The pride 225
That made her quit her countryside
Soon left her stranded in the crowd . . .
And precious little pride she had
To keep her warm these freezing days
Since she had fled the city-ways 230
To walk back home . . . aye! home again:
For, in the town, she'd tried in vain,
For honest work to earn her bread . . .
At one place, they'd nigh slaved her dead,
And starved her, too; and, when she left, 235
Had cheated her of half her wage:
But she'd no means to stop the theft . . .
And she'd had no more work to do . . .
Two months since, now . . . it seemed an age!
How she had lived, she scarcely knew . . . 240

And still, poor fool, too proud to write
To home for help, until, at length,
She'd not a penny for a bite,
Or pride enough to clothe her back . . .
So, she was tramping home, too poor 245
To pay the train-fare . . . she'd the strength,
If she'd the food . . . but that hard track,
And that cold, cruel, bitter night
Had taken all the heart from her . . .
If Michael knew, she felt quite sure . . . 250
For she would rather drop stone-dead
Than live as some . . . if she had cared
To feed upon the devil's bread,
She could have earned it easily . . .
She'd pride enough to starve instead, 255
Aye, starve, than fare as some girls fared . . .
But, that was all behind . . . and she
Was going home . . . and yet, maybe,
If they'd a home like hers, they, too,
Would be too proud . . . she only knew 260
The thought of home had kept her straight,
And saved her ere it was too late.
She'd soon be home again . . .
And now
She sat with hand upon her brow;
And did not speak again nor stir. 265

And, as he heard her words, his gaze
Still set upon the steady glare,
His thoughts turned back to city-ways:
And he remembered common sights
That he had seen in city nights: 270
And, once again, in early June,
He wandered through the midnight street;
And heard those ever-pacing feet

Of young girls, children yet in years,
With gaudy ribbons in their hair, 275
And shameless fevered eyes astare,
And slack lips set in brazen leers,
Who walked the pavements of despair,
Beneath the fair full Summer moon . . .
Shadowed by worn-out, wizened hags, 280
With claw-hands clutching filthy rags
About old bosoms, shrunk and thin,
And mouths aleer without a tooth,
Who dogged them, cursing their sleek youth
That filched their custom and their bread . . . 285
Then, in a reek of hot gaslight,
He stood where, through the Summer night,
Half-dozing in the stifling air,
The greasy landlord, fat with sin,
Sat, lolling in his easy chair, 290
Just halfway up the brothel stair,
To tax the earnings they brought in,
And harken for the policeman's tread . . .

Then, shuddering back from that foul place
And turning from the ovens' glare, 295
He looked into her dreaming face;
And saw green, sunlit woodlands there,
And waters flashing in between
Low-drooping boughs of Summer green.

And as he looked, still in a dream 300
She murmured: Michael would, she knew . . .
Though she'd been foolish . . . he was true,
As true as steel, and fond of her . . .
And then she sat with eyes agleam
In dreaming silence, till the stir 305
Of cold dawn shivered through the air:
When, twisting up her tumbled hair,

She rose; and said, she must be gone.
Though she'd still far to go, the day
Would see her well upon her way . . . 310
And she had best be jogging on,
While she'd the strength . . . and so, 'Good-by.'
And as, beneath the paling sky,
He trudged again the cinder-track
That stretched before him, dead and black, 315
He muttered: 'It's a chance the light
Has found me living still . . . and she—
She, too . . . and Michael . . . and through me!
God knows whom I may wake tonight.'
[1917]

The Death of the Hired Man

ROBERT FROST

Mary sat musing on the lamp-flame at the table
Waiting for Warren. When she heard his step,
She ran on tip-toe down the darkened passage
To meet him in the doorway with the news
And put him on his guard. 'Silas is back.' 5
She pushed him outward with her through the door
And shut it after her. 'Be kind,' she said.
She took the market things from Warren's arms
And set them on the porch, then drew him down
To sit beside her on the wooden steps. 10

'When was I ever anything but kind to him?
But I'll not have the fellow back,' he said.
'I told him so last haying, didn't I?
"If he left then," I said, "that ended it."
What good is he? Who else will harbor him 15
At his age for the little he can do?
What help he is there's no depending on.

Off he goes always when I need him most.
"He thinks he ought to earn a little pay,
Enough at least to buy tobacco with, 20
So he won't have to beg and be beholden."
"All right," I say, "I can't afford to pay
Any fixed wages, though I wish I could."
"Someone else can." "Then someone else will have to."
I shouldn't mind his bettering himself 25
If that was what it was. You can be certain,
When he begins like that, there's someone at him
Trying to coax him off with pocket-money,—
In haying time, when any help is scarce.
In winter he comes back to us. I'm done.' 30

'Sh! not so loud: he'll hear you,' Mary said.

'I want him to: he'll have to soon or late.'

'He's worn out. He's asleep beside the stove.
When I came up from Rowe's I found him here,
Huddled against the barn-door fast asleep, 35
A miserable sight, and frightening, too—
You needn't smile —I didn't recognize him—
I wasn't looking for him—and he's changed.
Wait till you see.'

'Where did you say he'd been?'

'He didn't say. I dragged him to the house, 40
And gave him tea and tried to make him smoke.
I tried to make him talk about his travels.
Nothing would do: he just kept nodding off.'

'What did he say? Did he say anything?'

'But little.'

'Anything? Mary, confess 45
He said he'd come to ditch the meadow for me.'

'Warren!'

'But did he? I just want to know.'
'Of course he did. What would you have him say?
Surely you wouldn't grudge the poor old man
Some humble way to save his self-respect. 50
He added, if you really care to know,
He meant to clear the upper pasture, too.
That sounds like something you have heard before?
Warren, I wish you could have heard the way
He jumbled everything. I stopped to look 55
Two or three times—he made me feel so queer—
To see if he was talking in his sleep.
He ran on Harold Wilson—you remember—
The boy you had in haying four years since.
He's finished school, and teaching in his college. 60
Silas declares you'll have to get him back.
He says they two will make a team for work:
Between them they will lay this farm as smooth!
The way he mixed that in with other things.
He thinks young Wilson a likely lad, though daft 65
On education—you know how they fought
All through July under the blazing sun,
Silas up on the cart to build the load,
Harold along beside to pitch it on.'

'Yes, I took care to keep well out of earshot.' 70

'Well, those days trouble Silas like a dream.
You wouldn't think they would. How some things linger!
Harold's young college boy's assurance piqued him.
After so many years he still keeps finding
Good arguments he sees he might have used. 75
I sympathize. I know just how it feels
To think of the right thing to say too late.
Harold's associated in his mind with Latin.

He asked me what I thought of Harold's saying
He studied Latin like the violin 80
Because he liked it—that an argument!
He said he couldn't make the boy believe
He could find water with a hazel prong—
Which showed how much good school had ever done him.
He wanted to go over that. But most of all 85
He thinks if he could have another chance
To teach him how to build a load of hay—'
'I know, that's Silas' one accomplishment.
He bundles every forkful in its place,
And tags and numbers it for future reference, 90
So he can find and easily dislodge it
In the unloading. Silas does that well.
He takes it out in bunches like big birds' nests.
You never see him standing on the hay
He's trying to lift, straining to lift himself.' 95

'He thinks if he could teach him that, he'd be
Some good perhaps to someone in the world.
He hates to see a boy the fool of books.
Poor Silas, so concerned for other folk,
And nothing to look backward to with pride, 100
And nothing to look forward to with hope,
So now and never any different.'

Part of a moon was falling down the west,
Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw 105
And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
As if she played unheard the tenderness
That wrought on him beside her in the night. 110
'Warren,' she said, 'he has come home to die:
You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time.'

'Home,' he mocked gently.

'Yes, what else but home?
It all depends on what you mean by home.
Of course he's nothing to us, any more 115
Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail.'

'Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in.'

'I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't to deserve.' 120

Warren leaned out and took a step or two,
Picked up a little stick, and brought it back
And broke it in his hand and tossed it by.
'Silas has better claim on us you think
Than on his brother? Thirteen little miles 125
As the road winds would bring him to his door.
Silas has walked that far no doubt today.
Why didn't he go there? His brother's rich,
A somebody—director in the bank.'

'He never told us that.'

'We know it though.' 130

'I think his brother ought to help, of course.
I'll see to that if there is need. He ought of right
To take him in, and might be willing to—
He may be better than appearances.
But have some pity on Silas. Do you think 135
If he'd had any pride in claiming kin
Or anything he looked for from his brother,
He'd keep so still about him all this time?'

'I wonder what's between them.'

'I can tell you.
Silas is what he is—we wouldn't mind him— 140
But just the kind that kinsfolk can't abide.
He never did a thing so very bad.
He don't know why he isn't quite as good
As anyone. He won't be made ashamed
To please his brother, worthless though he is.' 145

'*I* can't think Si ever hurt anyone.'

'No, but he hurt my heart the way he lay
And rolled his old head on that sharp-edged chair-back.
He wouldn't let me put him on the lounge.
You must go in and see what you can do. 150
I made the bed up for him there tonight.
You'll be surprised at him—how much he's broken.
His working days are done; I'm sure of it.'

'I'd not be in a hurry to say that.'

'I haven't been. Go, look, see for yourself. 155
But, Warren, please remember how it is:
He's come to help you ditch the meadow.
He has a plan. You mustn't laugh at him.
He may not speak of it, and then he may.
I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud 160
Will hit or miss the moon.'

It hit the moon.
Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.
Warren returned—too soon, it seemed to her,
Slipped to her side, caught up her hand and waited. 165

'Warren,' she questioned.

'Dead,' was all he answered.

[1914]

The Epic

An epic is a long narrative poem in heroic style. It deals with a hero; it tells of the beginning, continuance, and end of an action; and it concerns events of great significance to a tribe or a race. The Iliad deals with the Grecian war against Troy; the Æneid with the fall of Troy and the consequent founding of Rome; *Paradise Lost* with the relation of man's limited will and judgment to the divine power and wisdom.

There are many poems which have certain epic qualities, but which are not true epics. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, though they have certain epic qualities, are so loosely connected that they are rather collections of romances than epics. Tennyson's "Morte D'Arthur," although it was later absorbed into the *Idylls of the King*, was, indeed, originally written as a fragment of pure epic poetry, jestingly supposed to be the one book of an epic on King Arthur which was snatched from the fire. Likewise, Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum" deals with the final episode in what would have been, if fully developed, a long story; and hence it too is an epic fragment.

A considerable number of epics have been written, but the majority of these have been stiff rather than heroic, frigid rather than exalted. It is easy for an epic writer to become merely pompous; and the burlesquing of epic poetry has become a recognized form of literature. A mock epic deals with a trivial subject, or with a subject which it treats as trivial; but it makes use of the elaborate

mechanism of epic poetry, such as exalted language, the struggle of a hero, the intervention of the gods or other supernatural beings, the portents of impending fate, and the detailed description of scenes of action or of the person or equipment of the hero.

The most perfect specimen of the mock epic in English is *The Rape of the Lock*, in which Pope lavishes all the art of his verse upon a trifling episode. It is curious to observe that Pope was also interested in serious epic poetry; his translation of the Iliad, for all its faults, has been the most influential and the most widely read of the many which have appeared.

Of the true epics, as of the ballads, there are two principal classes, the popular and the artistic. A popular epic is the product of a simple national or tribal life, with the hero a type figure who represents the valor and the ideals of a whole people. There is a wide disagreement among critics concerning the authorship of popular epics, some regarding them as primarily the work of great poets, and others considering them as the product of many poets and much traditional poetry. In either case, the popular epic is an interweaving of the real and the imagined, of myth and historical record. *Beowulf* contains a reference to an historical encounter, but its central actions are fights with fabulous monsters. Old Roman swords are mentioned, but they are regarded as the product of giants, not merely of good workers in metals.

The artistic epic is the conscious effort of a later poet to write in the style and form of the earlier epics. However, he addresses the taste of his own age. Virgil's Æneid reflects Augustan Rome as Milton's *Paradise Lost* reflects Puritan England.

It should be remembered, however, that any good epic is a work of high literary art. The epic is not the earliest form of poetry, but is itself based on preceding legends and narrative poems. In fact, the conception of an epic, with its exalted style and its elaborate organization of the events into a whole, presupposes a well-developed sense of artistic form.

In the passages which follow it is impossible to present a complete epic. *Beowulf* is represented by a typical passage, which has been translated from the original Anglo-Saxon into English verse that maintains the spirit and manner of the old alliterative poetry. *Paradise Lost* is represented by the stately beginning of Book I; and *The Rape of the Lock* by Canto III, which contains the central action of the story. The epic episode is exemplified here by Tennyson's "Morte D'Arthur" as it originally appeared, before its inclusion in the *Idylls of the King*.

The Folk Epic

From Beowulf

Translated by John Lesslie Hall

[*Beowulf*, the only epic of the Anglo-Saxon race preserved entire, was composed about 750 A.D. The only manuscript which survives was written about 1000 A.D. There is some slight historical basis for the principal characters, but the events related here are mythical. The poem is written in half-lines, in alliterative Anglo-Saxon verse. The first few lines from the original of the selection given below are as follows:

Ða cōm of mōre under mist-hleoþum
Grendel gongan, Godes yrre bær;
mynte se mān-scaða manna cynnes
sumne besyrwan in sele þam hēan.

The story of the entire poem may be outlined thus:

Beowulf, the nephew of Hygelac, king of the Goths, hears that a monster, Grendel, is devastating the palace of Hrothgar, the

king of the Danes. He sails overseas from Sweden with fourteen of his tried warriors, offers his services, and gives the monster his death wound in a terrific contest. The mother of Grendel, a sea dragon, makes reprisals upon the person of a nobleman of Hrothgar's, whereupon Beowulf pursues the monster into the caves of ocean, kills her, brings back the head of Grendel, and thus frees from its terror the kingdom of the Danes. He then returns home laden with presents, is chosen king of the Goths upon the death of his uncle, and rules his people for fifty years. At length a fire-drake makes descent upon the people and palace; and the aged king, seeking out the monster, kills him, though his trusty sword fails him and he is done to death by the fiery poison of the dragon and by the wounds which it inflicts. His body is burned with great pomp by his mourning people.]

XI

'Neath the cloudy cliffs came from the moor then
Grendel going, God's anger bare he.
The monster intended some one of earthmen
In the hall-building grand to entrap and make away with;
He went under welkin[1] where well he knew of 5
The wine-joyous building, brilliant with plating,
Gold-hall[2] of earthmen. Not the earliest occasion
He the home and manor of Hrothgar had sought;
Ne'er found he in life-days later nor earlier
Hardier hero, hall-thanes[3] more sturdy! 10
Then came to the building the warrior marching,
Bereft of his joyance. The door quickly opened
On fire-hinges fastened, when his fingers had touched it;
The fell one had flung then—his fury so bitter—
Open the entrance. Early thereafter 15
The foeman trod the shining hall-pavement,
Strode he angrily; from the eyes of him glimmered
A luster unlovely likest to fire.
He beheld in the hall the heroes in numbers,
A circle of kinsmen sleeping together, 20
A throng of thanemen: then his thoughts were exultant,

[1] the arch of the heavens. [2] The palace, Heorot. [3] warrior-counselors.

He minded to sunder from each of the thanemen
The life of his body, horrible demon,
Ere morning came, since fate had allowed him
The prospect of plenty. Providence willed not 25
To permit him any more of men under heaven
To eat in the night-time. Higelac's kinsman[1]
Great sorrow endured how the dire-mooded creature
In unlooked-for assaults were likely to bear him.
No thought had the monster of deferring the matter, 30
But on earliest occasion he quickly laid hold of
A soldier asleep, suddenly tore him,
Bit his bone-prison, the blood drank in currents,
Swallowed in mouthfuls: he soon had the dead man's
Feet and hands, too, eaten entirely. 35
Nearer he strode then, the stout-hearted warrior
Snatched as he slumbered, seizing with hand-grip,
Forward the foeman foined[2] with his hand;
Caught he quickly the cunning deviser,
On his elbow he rested. This early discovered 40
The master of malice, that in middle-earth's regions,
'Neath the whole of the heavens, no hand-grapple greater
In any man else had he ever encountered:
Fearful in spirit, faint-mooded waxed he,
Not off could betake him; death he was pondering, 45
Would fly to his covert, seek the devils' assembly:
His calling no more was the same he had followed
Long in his lifetime. The liege-kinsman worthy
Of Higelac minded his speech of the evening,
Stood he up straight and stoutly did seize him. 50
His fingers crackled; the giant was outward,[3]
The earl stepped farther. The famous one minded
To flee away farther, if he found an occasion,
And off and away, avoiding delay,
To fly to the fen-moors; he fully was ware of 55

[1] Beowulf. [2] thrust. [3] free.

The strength of his grapple in the grip of the foeman.
'Twas an ill-taken journey that the injury-bringing,
Harrying harmer to Heorot wandered:
The palace reëchoed; to all of the Danemen,
Dwellers in castles, to each of the bold ones, 60
Earlmen, was terror. Angry they both were,
Archwarders[1] raging. Rattled the building;
'Twas a marvelous wonder that the wine-hall withstood then
The bold-in-battle, bent not to earthward,
Excellent earth-hall; but within and without it 65
Was fastened so firmly in fetters of iron,
By the art of the armorer. Off from the sill there
Bent mead-benches many, as men have informed me,
Adorned with gold-work, where the grim ones did struggle.
The Scylding[2] wise men weened ne'er before 70
That by might and main-strength a man under heaven
Might break it in pieces, bone-decked,[3] resplendent,
Crush it by cunning, unless clutch of the fire
In smoke should consume it. The sound mounted upward
Novel enough; on the North Danes fastened 75
A terror of anguish, on all of the men there
Who heard from the wall the weeping and plaining,
The song of defeat from the foeman of heaven,
Heard him hymns of horror howl, and his sorrow
Hell-bound bewailing. He[4] held him too firmly 80
Who was strongest of main-strength of men of that era.

XII

Grendel is Vanquished

For no cause whatever would the earlmen's defender
Leave in life-joys the loathsome newcomer,
He deemed his existence utterly useless
To men under heaven. Many a noble

[1] chief defenders.
[2] Danish.
[3] decorated, perhaps with antlers
[4] Beowulf.

Of Beowulf brandished his battle-sword old, 5
Would guard the life of his lord and protector,
The far-famous chieftain, if able to do so;
While waging the warfare, this wist they but little,
Brave battle-thanes, while his body intending
To slit into slivers, and seeking his spirit: 10
That the relentless foeman nor finest weapons
Of all on the earth, nor any of war-bills[1]
Was willing to injure; but weapons of victory,
Swords and suchlike, he had sworn to dispense with.
His death at that time must prove to be wretched, 15
And the far-away spirit widely should journey
Into enemies' power. This plainly he saw then
Who with mirth of mood malice no little
Had wrought in the past on the race of the earthmen
(To God he was hostile), that his body would fail him, 20
But Higelac's hardy henchman and kinsman
Held him by the hand; hateful to other
Was each one if living. A body-wound suffered
The direful demon, damage incurable
Was seen on his shoulder, his sinews were shivered, 25
His body did burst. To Beowulf was given
Glory in battle; Grendel from thenceward
Must flee and hide him in the fen-cliffs and marshes,
Sick unto death, his dwelling must look for
Unwinsome and woeful; he wist the more fully 30
The end of his earthly existence was nearing,
His life-days' limits. At last for the Danemen,
When the slaughter was over, their wish was accomplished.
The comer-from-far-land had cleansed then of evil,
Wise and valiant, the war-hall of Hrothgar, 35
Saved it from violence. He joyed in the night-work,
In repute for prowess; the prince of the Geatmen[2]
For the East-Danish people his boast had accomplished,

[1] weapons. [2] Goths, people of southern Sweden.

Bettered their burdensome bale-sorrows fully,
The craft-begot evil they erstwhile had suffered 40
And were forced to endure from crushing oppression,
Their manifold misery. 'Twas a manifest token,
When the hero-in-battle the hand suspended,
The arm and the shoulder (there was all of the claw
Of Grendel together) 'neath great-stretching hall-roof. 45

The Artistic Epic

From Paradise Lost

JOHN MILTON

[The purpose of *Paradise Lost* is to show the origin of man and the universe in which he lives, to account for evil in the world and in man's nature, to set forth the relationship between Man and his Creator, and especially, as the first few lines show, to treat of man's fall from a state of perfection to one of sinfulness. The first book, from which the extract below is taken, is a general account—amplified in subsequent books—of the revolt in Heaven by means of which Lucifer, a powerful prince, since known as Satan, aspired to equal the Almighty in power. He seduced a third of the spirits of Heaven into rebellion, but was overcome by the hosts of the loyal powers, led by the Son of God. In punishment, the rebellious host was driven from Heaven to Hell, the nethermost of all existing regions.]

I

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,[1] 5
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb,[2] or of Sinai,[3] didst inspire
That Shepherd[4] who first taught the chosen seed

[1] the restoration of man to Eden, or Paradise.
[2] Mount Horeb, in the Sinaitic peninsula.
[3] Mount Sinai, upon which Moses was given the Ten Commandments.
[4] Moses.

In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill[1] 10
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook[2] that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God,[3] I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount,[4] while it pursues 15
Things unattempted yet in prose or rime.
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit,[5] that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread, 20
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,[6]
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the highth of this great argument,[7]
I may assert Eternal Providence, 25
And justify the ways of God to men.
Say first—for Heaven hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of Hell—say first what cause
Moved our grand Parents, in that happy state,
Favored of Heaven so highly, to fall off 30
From their Creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the World besides.
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
The infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived 35
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host

[1] Zion, on which was built the holy city of Jerusalem.
[2] Siloam, a pool near Jerusalem, supplied by an intermittent spring.
[3] The temple at Jerusalem.
[4] Mount Helicon, sacred to the Muses.
[5] The Holy Spirit.
[6] The great void which preceded the work of creation.
[7] Subject of discourse in a narrative poem.

Of rebel Angels, by whose aid, aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equaled the Most High, 40
If he opposed, and, with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God,
Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky, 45
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.
Nine times the space that measures day and night 50
To mortal men, he, with his horrid crew,
Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,
Confounded, though immortal. But his doom
Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain 55
Torments him: round he throws his baleful eyes,
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay,
Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.
At once, as far as Angel's ken, he views
The dismal situation waste and wild. 60
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames
No light; but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace 65
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all, but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.
Such place Eternal Justice had prepared 70
For those rebellious; here their prison ordained
In utter darkness, and their portion set,

As far removed from God and light of Heaven
As from the center thrice to the utmost pole.[1]
Oh how unlike the place from whence they fell! 75
There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns; and, weltering by his side,
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and named 80
BEELZEBUB. To whom the Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heaven called SATAN, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:—
'If thou beest he—but Oh how fallen! how changed
From him!—who, in the happy realms of light, 85
Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
Myriads, though bright—if he whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
Joined with me once, now misery hath joined 90
In equal ruin; into what pit thou seest
From what highth fallen: so much the stronger proved
He with his thunder[2]: and till then who knew
The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,
Nor what the potent Victor in his rage 95
Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,
Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind,
And high disdain from sense of injured merit,
That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along 100
Innumerable force of Spirits armed,
That durst dislike his reign, and, me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power opposed
In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,

[1] Three times the radius of the universe as the ancients conceived it, counting the center of the earth as its center.

[2] Thunder and lightning were scarcely distinguished from each other as agents of destruction, in Milton's time.

And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?
All is not lost—the unconquerable will, 106
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome.
That glory never shall his wrath or might 110
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deify his power
Who, from the terror of this arm, so late
Doubted his empire—that were low indeed;
That were an ignominy and shame beneath 115
This downfall; since, by fate, the strength of Gods,
And this empyreal substance, cannot fail;
Since, through experience of this great event,
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,
We may with more successful hope resolve 120
To wage by force or guile eternal war,
Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven.'
So spake the apostate Angel, though in pain, 125
Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair;
And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:—
'O Prince, O Chief of many thronèd Powers
That led the embattled Seraphim[1] to war
Under thy conduct and, in dreadful deeds 130
Fearless, endangered Heaven's perpetual King,
And put to proof his high supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate!
Too well I see and rue the dire event
That, with sad overthrow and foul defeat, 135
Hath lost us Heaven, and all this mighty host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as Gods and Heavenly essences

[1] Angels of the highest order.

Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigor soon returns, 140
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallowed up in endless misery.
But what if He our Conqueror (whom I now
Of force believe almighty, since no less
Than such could have o'erpowered such force as ours)
Have left us this our spirit and strength entire, 146
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of war, whate'er his business be, 150
Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,
Or do his errands in the gloomy Deep?
What can it then avail though yet we feel
Strength undiminished, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment?' 155

Whereto with speedy words the Arch-Fiend replied:—
'Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure—
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight, 160
As being the contrary to His high will
Whom we resist. If then his providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labor must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil; 165
Which ofttimes may succeed so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destined aim.
But see! the angry Victor hath recalled
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit 170
Back to the gates of Heaven: the sulphurous hail,
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid
The fiery surge that from the precipice

Of Heaven received us falling; and the thunder,
Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage, 175
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless Deep.
Let us not slip the occasion, whether scorn
Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.
Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild, 180
The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves;
There rest, if any rest can harbor there; 185
And reassembling our afflicted powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire calamity,
What reënforcement we may gain from hope, 190
If not, what resolution from despair.'
[1667]

The Epic Episode

Morte D'Arthur

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea,
Until King Arthur's table,[1] man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonnesse[2] about their lord,
King Arthur; then, because his wound was deep, 5
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,

[1] fraternity of knights.
[2] A mythical region southwest of Cornwall, now supposedly sunk into the sea.

A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land. 10
On one side lay the ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.
  Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'The sequel[1] of today unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights 15
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls 20
Of Camelot,[2] as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm 25
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand[3] Excalibur,
Which was my pride; for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake, 30
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known. 35
But now delay not; take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere;
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'
  To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus, 40
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.

[1] result. [2] Arthur's legendary capital. [3] sword.

Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'
  So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept 45
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths and juts of pointed rock, 50
Came on the shining levels of the lake.
  There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt; 55
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewelry. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind, 60
In act to throw; but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king. 65
  Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen, or what hast heard?'
  And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, 70
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'
  To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight; 75
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief[1] and dear, and do the thing 80
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'
  Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt, 85
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:
  'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost forever from the earth, 90
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand 95
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The king is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? but were this kept, 100
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the lake[2];
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps 105
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence;
But now much honor and much fame were lost.'
  So spake he, clouded with his own conceit, 110
And hid Excalibur the second time,

[1] beloved. [2] One of the guardian spirits of the king.

And so strode back slow to the wounded king.
  Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen, or what hast heard?'
  And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere: 115
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'
  To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! 120
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all, 125
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence; 130
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'
  Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword, 135
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,[1]
Seen where the moving isles[2] of winter shock 140
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur;
But ere he dipped the surface, rose an arm
Cloth'd in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 145

[1] like the aurora borealis. [2] icebergs.

Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the king.
  Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out; what is it thou hast heard, or seen?' 150
  And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men, 155
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 160
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'
  And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
'My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear 165
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'
  So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere 170
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs. 175
  But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the king,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.' 180

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad. 185
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels— 190
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.
  Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware 195
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony 200
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.
  Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'
And to the barge they came. There those three queens
Put forth their hands, and took the king, and wept. 206
But she that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud, 210
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood; for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops 215

Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips. 220
So like a shatter'd column lay the king;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings. 225

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance, 230
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders[1] with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world; 235
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new, 240
And God fulfills himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou, 245
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.

[1] the Magi.

For what are men better than sheep or goats 250
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. 255
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
For all my mind is clouded with a doubt—
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, 260
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'
So said he, and the barge with oar and sail 265
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull 270
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

[1842]

Narrative Poetry

The Mock Epic

From The Rape of the Lock

An Heroi-comical Poem

ALEXANDER POPE

[A quarrel had arisen between two families and the friends of each because young Lord Petre had clipped a curl from the head of Miss Arabella Fermor, the Belinda of the tale. Mr. Caryl, a friend of both the families, besought Pope to write something to restore the good nature of all the persons concerned, and the first three cantos, which were written in two weeks, were the result. The success of these led Pope to add the last two, with the machinery of the gnomes and the sylphs.]

CANTO III

Close by those meads, forever crowned with flowers,
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,
There stands a structure of majestic frame,[1]
Which from the neighboring Hampton takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom 5
Of foreign tyrants and of nymphs at home;
Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.
  Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures of a court; 10
In various talk th' instructive hours they passed,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
And one describes a charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes; 15
At every word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.
  Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray; 20

[1] Hampton Court Palace, near London.

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;
The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labors of the toilet cease.
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites, 25
Burns to encounter two adventurous knights,
At ombre singly to decide their doom;
And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.
Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,[1]
Each band the number of the sacred nine. 30
Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aërial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card:
First, Ariel perched upon a Matadore,[2]
Then each, according to the rank they bore;
For sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race, 35
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.
  Behold, four kings in majesty revered,
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;
And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flower,
The expressive emblem of their softer power; 40
Four knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And parti-colored troops, a shining train,
Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.
  The skillful nymph reviews her force with care: 45
Let spades be trumps! she said, and trumps they were.
  Now moved to war her sable Matadores,
In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable lord!
Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board. 50
As many more Manillio forced to yield
And marched a victor from the verdant field.

[1] Pronounced "jine."
[2] This and the names that follow are all terms in ombre, a favorite card game of the eighteenth century.

Him Basto followed, but his fate more hard
Gained but one trump and one plebeian card.
With his broad saber next, a chief in years, 55
The hoary majesty of spades appears,
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,
The rest, his many-colored robe concealed.
The rebel knave, who dares his prince engage,
Proves the just victim of his royal rage. 60
E'en mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew,
And mowed down armies in the fights of Loo,
Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguished by the victor spade!
Thus far both armies to Belinda yield; 65
Now to the baron fate inclines the field.
His warlike Amazon her host invades,
The imperial consort of the crown of spades;
The club's black tyrant first her victim died,
Spite of his haughty mien, and barbarous pride. 70
What boots the regal circle on his head,
His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;
That long behind he trails his pompous robe,
And, of all monarchs, only grasps the globe?
The baron now his diamonds pours apace; 75
Th' embroidered king who shows but half his face,
And his refulgent queen, with powers combined,
Of broken troops an easy conquest find.
Clubs, diamonds, hearts, in wild disorder seen,
With throngs promiscuous strew the level green. 80
Thus when dispersed a routed army runs,
Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,
With like confusion different nations fly,
Of various habit, and of various dye,
The pierced battalions disunited fall, 85
In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.
The knave of diamonds tries his wily arts,

And wins (oh shameful chance!) the queen of hearts.
At this the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,
A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look; 90
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,
Just in the jaws of ruin, and codille.
And now (as oft in some distempered state)
On one nice trick depends the general fate.
An ace of hearts steps forth; the king unseen 95
Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive queen:
He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the prostrate ace.
The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;
The walls, the woods, and long canals reply. 100
  Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,
Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.
Sudden, these honors shall be snatched away,
And cursed forever this victorious day.
  For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crowned,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;[1] 106
On shining altars of Japan[2] they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze;
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives the smoking tide: 110
At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipped, the fuming liquor fanned,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes displayed. 115
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.
Coffee (which makes the politician wise,
And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapors to the baron's brain
New stratagems the radiant lock to gain. 120

[1] Coffee is now being prepared.
[2] tables of Japanese lacquer, much in fashion at the time.

Ah, cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,
Fear the just gods, and think of Scylla's fate![1]
Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair!
But when to mischief mortals bend their will, 125
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
Just then Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case:
So ladies in romance assist their knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight. 130
He takes the gift with reverence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.
Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair, 135
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear;
Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close recesses of the virgin's thought; 140
As on the nosegay in her breast reclined,
He watched th' ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,
An earthly lover lurking at her heart.
Amazed, confused, he found his power expired, 145
Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired.
The peer now spreads the glittering forfex wide,
T' inclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.
E'en then, before the fatal engine closed,
A wretched sylph too fondly interposed; 150
Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again).

[1] Scylla cut from the head of her father, King Nisus, the purple lock upon which the safety of his people depended, and gave it to King Minos, her lover and her father's enemy. Nisus was transformed into an eagle, Scylla into a bird preyed upon by the eagle.

The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
From the fair head, forever, and forever!
  Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes, 155
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs breathe their last;
Or when rich China vessels, fallen from high,
In glittering dust and painted fragments lie! 160
  'Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,'
The victor cried; 'the glorious prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British fair,
As long as Atalantis[1] shall be read, 165
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,[2]
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When numerous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honor, name, and praise shall live! 170
What Time would spare, from steel receives its date,[3]
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!
Steel could the labor of the gods destroy,
And strike to dust th' imperial towers of Troy;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound, 175
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel
The conquering force of unresisted steel?'

[1] *The New Atalantis* (1709), a scandalous romance by Mrs. Manley.
[2] Used when ladies of fashion received friends in their bedchambers, after the French custom.
[3] final date, ending.

Lyric Poetry

Lyric poetry may be distinguished from the other large classes of poetry, the narrative and the dramatic, in three different ways.

In regard to thought, the lyric is subjective, expressing the emotion of the author in his own person, or as he speaks for his church, his nation, or an imaginary character. Narrative or dramatic poetry is more largely objective. Such plays as Byron's, however, into which the author's personality enters too largely, are essentially undramatic. Some modern narrative poetry, dealing with the psychology of the central characters rather than with their actions, tends likewise to be subjective.

In regard to length and form, the lyric is brief and closely knit, generally with rime and with fixed stanza forms to bind it in the closest possible unity. A lyric expresses but a single thought or mood, with little attention to what goes before or what follows; only in song sequences or sonnet cycles is an effort made to develop a more varied emotional experience. Narrative and dramatic poems are longer and looser, for they deal with a series of events in their relation to each other. Poe's famous contention that a long poem is an impossibility is really an argument in favor of the lyric form; it is impossible for a lyric to be very long, as it is for a narrative or a dramatic poem to be very brief. The lyric is somewhat like a flash of lightning, the narrative poem like electrical power transmitted steadily over a network of wires.

In regard to the method of delivery, the lyric is thought of as being sung, or, if not sung to music, at least as being spoken with a strong feeling for the musical quality of language. Narrative poetry is thought of as recited, dramatic poetry as spoken in dialogue.

There are passages in narrative or dramatic poetry which are intensely lyrical, and sometimes even actual songs are introduced. Some poems lie on the border line between two types, and are regarded as lyrical ballads or lyrical dramas; but the general classification is fairly easy to determine.

According to Professor Gummere, "The history of modern verse, with epic and drama in decay, is mainly the history of lyrical sentiment." Especially since the Romantic movement, the lyric has been by far the principal kind of poetry written.

The Song

The song, however, is a form of lyric in which modern poets have not usually excelled. It is the expression of simple emotion in the most direct and musical form. A song must not only be capable of being sung—the multiplication table can be set to music, and the words of many songs read very badly without the accompanying music; it must also be so musical in itself as to arouse in the reader or hearer the feeling of song. It has been best written by the Elizabethans, among whom music and lyrical poetry were kindred arts; and by such moderns as Burns, who could compose words to folk-melodies running in his head, or Scott, in whom the style of the old ballad-songs was almost instinctive.

More commonly, our modern song-writers are too subtle, too analytical, and too purely intellectual for the truest effects of song. But Tennyson's "Sweet and Low" illustrates the simple song at a very high level, as his "Tears, Idle Tears" is an example of a fine lyric which is almost too full of reflection to be considered a song.

Two special types are the choral song, expressing the feelings of a group and perhaps arranged for singing by many voices, and the hymn, expressing religious devotion. Perhaps the most popular of all choral songs is "Auld Lang Syne." Many hymns suffer in poetic quality because they give voice to doctrines which have ceased to express the religious aspirations of the age; many others suffer because they have long been associated with inadequate musical settings; and the doggerel of many so-called hymns has thrown discredit on far better but less widely known religious songs. There are not a few beautiful hymns—rather more than most critics are in the habit of admitting, although some of the finest of these, such as Newman's and Whittier's, were not written originally for use as hymns.

'And Wilt thou Leave me Thus?'

SIR THOMAS WYATT

And wilt thou leave me thus?
  Say, 'Nay!'; say, 'Nay!' for shame!
  To save thee from the blame
  Of all my grief and grame.[1]
And wilt thou leave me thus? 5
  Say, 'Nay!'; say, 'Nay!'

[1] sorrow.

And wilt thou leave me thus,
  That hath loved thee so long
  In wealth and woe among:
  And is thy heart so strong 10
As for to leave me thus?
  Say, 'Nay!'; say, 'Nay!'

And wilt thou leave me thus,
  That hath given thee my heart,
  Never for to depart; 15
  Neither for pain, nor smart:
And wilt thou leave me thus?
  Say, 'Nay!'; say, 'Nay!'

And wilt thou leave me thus,
  And have no more pity 20
  Of him that loveth thee?
  Alas! thy cruelty!
And wilt thou leave me thus?
  Say, 'Nay!'; say, 'Nay!'
[1557]

'Who is Silvia?'

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From "Two Gentlemen of Verona"

Who is Silvia? what is she,
  That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she;
  The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admired be. 5

Is she kind as she is fair?
  For beauty lives with kindness.

The Song

Love doth to her eyes repair
  To help him of his blindness,
And, being helped, inhabits there. 10

Then to Silvia let us sing,
  That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
  Upon the dull earth dwelling.
To her let us garlands bring. 15

[*c.* 1592]

'Blow, Blow, thou Winter Wind'

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From "As You Like It"

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
  As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen, 5
  Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
  Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
    This life is most jolly. 10

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
That dost not bite so nigh
  As benefits forgot;
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp 15
  As friend rememb'red not.

[1600]

'O Mistress Mine, Where are you Roaming?'

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From "Twelfth Night"

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O, stay and hear; your true love's coming,
  That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers meeting, 5
  Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
  What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty; 10
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
  Youth's a stuff will not endure.
[1601]

Song: To Celia

BEN JONSON

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
  And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
  And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise 5
  Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
  I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
  Not so much honoring thee 10
As giving it a hope, that there
  It could not withered be.

The Song

But thou thereon didst only breathe,
  And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear, 15
  Not of itself, but thee.
[1616]

To Lucasta, Going to the Wars

RICHARD LOVELACE

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
  That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
  To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase, 5
  The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
  A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
  As thou too shalt adore; 10
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
  Loved I not Honor more.
[1649]

To Althea, from Prison

RICHARD LOVELACE

When Love with unconfinèd wings
  Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings
  To whisper at the grates;
When I lie tangled in her hair 5
  And fetter'd to her eye,
The birds that wanton in the air
  Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round
  With no allaying Thames, 10
Our careless heads with roses bound,
  Our hearts with loyal flames;
When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
  When healths and draughts go free—
Fishes that tipple in the deep 15
  Know no such liberty.

When, like committed linnets, I
  With shriller throat shall sing
The sweetness, mercy, majesty,
  And glories of my King; 20
When I shall voice aloud how good
  He is, how great should be,
Enlargèd[1] winds, that curl the flood,
  Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make, 25
  Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
  That for an hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love
  And in my soul am free, 30
Angels alone, that soar above,
  Enjoy such liberty.

[1649]

'The Lark now Leaves his Wat'ry Nest'

SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT

The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest,
  And climbing shakes his dewy wings.
He takes your window for the East,

[1] free.

The Song

And to implore your light he sings—
Awake, awake! the morn will never rise 5
Till she can dress her beauty at your eyes.

The merchant bows unto the seaman's star,
The plowman from the sun his season takes;
But still the lover wonders what they are
Who look for day before his mistress wakes. 10
Awake, awake! break thro' your veils of lawn!
Then draw your curtains, and begin the dawn!
[1672]

'John Anderson my Jo, John'

ROBERT BURNS

John Anderson my jo,[1] John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonie brow was brent[2];
But now your brow is beld,[3] John, 5
Your locks are like the snaw,
But blessings on your frosty pow,[4]
John Anderson my jo!

John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither, 10
And monie a cantie[5] day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither;
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot, 15
John Anderson my jo!
[1790]

[1] sweetheart. [2] smooth. [3] bald. [4] head. [5] gladsome.

The Banks o' Doon

ROBERT BURNS

[The version here followed is Burns's first.]

Ye flowery banks o' bonie Doon,
  How can ye blume sae fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
  And I sae fu' o' care?

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonie bird, 5
  That sings upon the bough:
Thou minds me o' the happy days
  When my fause Luve was true!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
  That sings beside thy mate: 10
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
  And wist na o' my fate!

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon
  To see the woodbine twine,
And ilka[1] bird sang o' its luve, 15
  And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
  Frae aff its thorny tree,
And my fause luver staw[2] the rose,
  But left the thorn wi' me. 20

[1791]

[1] every. [2] stole.

The Song

'Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace Bled'

ROBERT BURNS

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace[1] bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
  Or to victory!
Now's the day, and now's the hour; 5
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
  Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave? 10
Wha sae base as be a slave?
  Let him turn and flee!
Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or Freeman fa', 15
  Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
  But they shall be free! 20
Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
  Let us do or die!

[1794]

[1] William Wallace, insurgent leader of the Scotch against the English, was betrayed and executed in London, 1305. The poem expresses the author's sympathy for the French Revolution, as well as his own patriotic feeling.

Auld Lang Syne

ROBERT BURNS

CHORUS

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne!

Should auld acquaintance be forgot, 5
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne!

And surely ye'll be[1] your pint-stowp,[2]
And surely I'll be mine, 10
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne!

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pou'd the gowans[3] fine,
But we've wandered monie a weary fit[4] 15
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidled in the burn[5]
Frae morning sun till dine,[6]
But seas between us braid hae roared
Sin' auld lang syne. 20

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,[7]
And gie's a hand o' thine,
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught[8]
For auld lang syne!

[1796]

[1] stand for. [2] tankard. [3] daisies. [4] foot. [5] paddled in the brook. [6] dinner. [7] boon companion. [8] hearty draught.

The Song

"Green Grow the Rashes, O"

ROBERT BURNS

CHORUS

Green grow the rashes, O;
  Green grow the rashes, O;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend
  Are spent among the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han', 5
  In ev'ry hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
  An' 'twere nae for the lasses, O.

The war'ly[1] race may riches chase,
  An' riches still may fly them, O; 10
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
  Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.

But gie me a cannie[2] hour at e'en,
  My arms about my dearie, O,
An' war'ly cares, an' war'ly men 15
  May a' gae tapsalteerie,[3] O!

For you sae douce,[4] ye sneer at this;
  Ye're nought but senseless asses, O;
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
  He dearly lov'd the lasses, O. 20

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
  Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her prentice han' she try'd on man,
  An' then she made the lasses, O.

[1803]

[1] worldly. [2] quiet. [3] topsy-turvy. [4] sedate.

A Red, Red Rose

ROBERT BURNS

O, my luve's like a red, red rose,
  That's newly sprung in June:
O, my luve's like the melodie
  That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair thou art, my bonie lass, 5
  So deep in luve am I:
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
  Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
  And the rocks melt wi' the sun: 10
I will luve thee still, my dear,
  While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!
  And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my luve, 15
  Tho' it were ten thousand mile.
[1796]

'O, Wert thou in the Cauld Blast'

ROBERT BURNS

O, wert thou in the cauld blast,
  On yonder lea, on yonder lea;
My plaidie to the angry airt,[1]
  I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.
Or did misfortune's bitter storms 5
  Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield[2] should be my bosom,
  To share it a', to share it a'.

[1] point of the compass; direction. [2] shelter.

The Song

Or were I in the wildest waste,
  Of earth and air, of earth and air, 10
The desert were a paradise,
  If thou wert there, if thou wert there.
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
  Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown, 15
  Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.
[1800]

Hunting Song

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain dawns the day,
All the jolly chase is here,
With hawk and horse and hunting-spear!
Hounds are in their couples yelling, 5
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
'Waken, lords and ladies gay.'

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain gray, 10
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chant our lay, 15
'Waken, lords and ladies gay.'

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
To the greenwood haste away;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot and tall of size; 20

We can show the marks he made,
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;
You shall see him brought to bay,
'Waken, lords and ladies gay.'

Louder, louder chant the lay, 25
Waken, lords and ladies gay!
Tell them youth and mirth and glee
Run a course as well as we;
Time, stern huntsman, who can balk,
Stanch as hound and fleet as hawk? 30
Think of this and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay.
[1808]

'Soldier, Rest! thy Warfare O'er'

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
  Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;
Dream of battled fields no more,
  Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall, 5
  Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
  Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more; 10
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
  Armor's clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch summon here 15
  Mustering clan or squadron tramping.
Yet the lark's shrill fife may come

The Song

At the daybreak from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow. 20
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here,
Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans or squadrons stamping.

Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done; 25
While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
Dream not, with the rising sun,
Bugles here shall sound reveille.
Sleep! the deer is in his den;
Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying: 30
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen
How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye 35
Here no bugles sound reveille.
[1810]

'Tis the Last Rose of Summer'

THOMAS MOORE

'Tis the last rose of summer
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flower of her kindred, 5
No rosebud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes,
Or give sigh for sigh.

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one!
To pine on the stem; 10

Since the lovely are sleeping,
  Go, sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter
  Thy leaves o'er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden 15
  Lie scentless and dead.

So soon may *I* follow,
  When friendships decay,
And from love's shining circle
  The gems drop away! 20
When true hearts lie withered,
  And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
  This bleak world alone!

[1813]

'She Walks in Beauty'

George Gordon, Lord Byron

[Thomas Moore says: "These stanzas were written by Lord Byron on returning from a ballroom where he had seen Lady Wilmot Horton, the wife of his relation. On this occasion Lady Wilmot had appeared in mourning, with numerous spangles on her dress."]

She walks in beauty, like the night
  Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
  Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light 5
  Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
  Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
  Or softly lightens o'er her face; 10

The Song

Where thoughts serenely sweet express
  How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
  So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow, 15
  But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
  A heart whose love is innocent!
[1815]

'A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea'

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
  A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
  And bends the gallant mast;
And bends the gallant mast, my boys, 5
  While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
  Old England on the lee.

O for a soft and gentle wind!
  I heard a fair one cry; 10
But give to me the snoring breeze
  And white waves heaving high;
And white waves heaving high, my boys,
  The good ship tight and free—
The world of waters is our home, 15
  And merry men are we.

There's tempest in yon horned moon,
  And lightning in yon cloud;
And hark the music, mariners!
  The wind is piping loud; 20
The wind is piping loud, my boys,

The lightning flashes free—
While the hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea.

[*c.* 1820]

The Indian Serenade

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright;
I arise from dreams of thee, 5
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wandering airs, they faint
On the dark, the silent stream; 10
The Champak[1] odors fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine, 15
Oh, beloved as thou art!

Oh lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale. 20
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast,
Oh! press it to thine own again
Where it will break at last.

[1822]

[1] An East Indian tree with fragrant blossoms; related to the magnolia.

The Song

To —

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair 5
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not 10
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar 15
From the sphere of our sorrow?

[1824]

'Break, Break, Break'

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

[The death of Arthur Hallam, most intimate friend of Tennyson, prompted this poem.]

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy, 5
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad.
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
  To their haven under the hill; 10
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
  And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
  At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead 15
  Will never come back to me.
[1842]

'Tears, Idle Tears'

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more. 5

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld.
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more. 10

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more. 15

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more! 20
[1847]

The Song

'Sweet and Low'

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

From "The Princess"

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
  Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
  Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go, 5
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
  Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
  Father will come to thee soon; 10
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
  Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
  Under the silver moon; 15
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

[1850]

Crossing the Bar

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

["'Crossing the Bar' was written in my father's eighty-first year, on a day in October. . . .

"I said, 'That is the crown of your life's work.' He answered, 'It came in a moment.' He explained the 'Pilot' as 'That Divine and Unseen Who is always guiding us.'

"A few days before my father's death he said to me: 'Mind you put "Crossing the Bar" at the end of all editions of my poems.'"—Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson, A Memoir*, Vol. II, p. 367]

Sunset and evening star,
  And one clear call for me!

And may there be no moaning of the bar,
  When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep, 5
  Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
  Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
  And after that the dark! 10
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
  When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourn of Time and Place
  The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face 15
  When I have crost the bar.

[1889]

Song

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

When I am dead, my dearest,
  Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me 5
  With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain; 10
I shall not hear the nightingale
  Sing on as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
  That doth not rise nor set,

The Song

Haply I may remember, 15
And haply may forget.
[1862]

'O Captain! my Captain!'

WALT WHITMAN

[Written in commemoration of the death of President Abraham Lincoln.]

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:
But O heart! heart! heart! 5
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills; 10
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck, 15
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship comes in with object won: 20
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.
[1865]

'The Night has a Thousand Eyes'[1]

FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON

The night has a thousand eyes,
  And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
  With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes, 5
  And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
  When love is done.

[*c.* 1870]

Requiem

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
  And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me: 5
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
  And the hunter home from the hill.

[1887]

'O, Inexpressible as Sweet'

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

O, inexpressible as sweet,
  Love takes my voice away;
I cannot tell thee when we meet
  What most I long to say.

[1] Used by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

The Song

But hadst thou hearing in thy heart 5
  To know what beats in mine,
Then shouldst thou walk, where'er thou art,
  In melodies divine.

So warbling birds lift higher notes
  Than to our ears belong; 10
The music fills their throbbing throats,
  But silence steals the song.

[1890]

'Alter? When the Hills Do'[1]

EMILY DICKINSON

Alter? When the hills do.
Falter? When the sun
Question if his glory
Be the perfect one.

Surfeit? When the daffodil 5
Doth of the dew:
Even as herself, O friend!
I will of you!

[1890]

The Sea Gypsy

RICHARD HOVEY

I am fevered with the sunset,
I am fretful with the bay,
For the wander-thirst is on me
And my soul is in Cathay.[2]

[1] Copyright, Little, Brown & Company, Boston.
[2] Eastern Asia; China; any rich and luxuriant region of the imagination.

There's a schooner in the offing, 5
With her topsails shot with fire,
And my heart has gone aboard her
For the Islands of Desire.

I must forth again tomorrow!
With the sunset I must be 10
Hull down on the trail of rapture
In the wonder of the sea.
[1896]

'O World, Be Nobler'[1]

LAURENCE BINYON

O World, be nobler, for her sake!
If she but knew thee what thou art,
What wrongs are borne, what deeds are done
In thee, beneath thy daily sun,
Know'st thou not that her tender heart 5
For pain and very shame would break?
O World, be nobler, for her sake!
[1902]

Passing

MARGARET L. WOODS

With thoughts too lovely to be true,
With thousand, thousand dreams I strew
The path that you must come. And you
Will find but dew.

I set an image in the grass, 5
A shape to smile on you, Alas!
It is a shadow in the glass,
And so will pass.

[1] Used by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

The Song

I break my heart here, love, to dower
With all its inmost sweet your bower. 10
What scent will greet you in an hour?
The gorse in flower.

[1008]

Sea Fever[1]

JOHN MASEFIELD

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And a wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face, and a gray dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied; 6
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife; 10
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And a quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

[1] From *The Story of a Round-House and Other Poems*, by John Masefield. Copyright, 1913, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

The Sonnet

Of the conventional forms in which lyric poetry is written, the most common is the sonnet, a poem of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter with a rime scheme more or less fixed. It develops a single definite idea or sentiment.

The sonnet was introduced from Italy by Sir Thomas Wyatt in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Later in the century the English began to compose series of sonnets, called sequences or cycles, usually love poems and often a hundred or more in number. The sonnet sequence is less common in later times, although it has been used by Mrs. Browning, D. G. Rossetti, and others; but the separate sonnet is still a favorite form.

In the original Italian sonnet (which is still the standard form in use) the first eight lines (the octave) rime *abbaabba*. The last six (the sestet) rime *cdecde* or *cdcdcd* or in some other combination of two or three rime sounds. The Italian sonnet must not end in a couplet, and the octave should introduce a thought which the sestet develops. English poets have often varied from this strict form: Wyatt and Sidney used a concluding couplet; Milton neglected the division of thought between the octave and the sestet; Wordsworth varied the rimes, sometimes introducing a third sound in the octave. Today the tendency is toward strict observance of the type.

The difficulty of such frequent and recurrent rime in English, together with the English dislike of fixed forms, gave rise to the English or Shakespearian sonnet, first

written by the Earl of Surrey. In this there are three quatrains and a couplet, which rime *ababcdcdefefgg*. Here the division between the octave and the sestet does not need to be observed, and the emphatic couplet at the end is quite unlike the dying fall which characterizes an Italian sonnet. Many notable sonnets, such as Shakespeare's and a few of the best by Keats, are written in the English form; but these owe their beauty to the diction and to the wealth of thought expressed, not to the loose form in which they are written.

There are also irregular poems of fourteen lines which are sometimes called free sonnets; and a few poets have attempted to fix new sonnet forms. Spenser's *Amoretti* is a sequence of sonnets which rime *ababbcbccdcdee*; but the form has not found acceptance with other poets.

The close-knit structure of the sonnet is often an aid to a great poet, such as Wordsworth, who is inclined to diffuseness and lack of form; and it sometimes enables a minor poet to reach a height which he has not approached in his longer writings. However, some of the greatest English poets, as well as the foremost American poets, have made little use of the sonnet.

Description of Spring

Wherein Each Thing Renews, Save Only the Lover

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY

The soote[1] season that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale;
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to her make[2] hath told her tale:

[1] sweet. [2] mate.

Summer is come, for every spray now springs; 5
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale[1];
The buck in brake his winter cote he flings;
The fishes flete[2] with new repairèd scale;
The adder all her slough away she flings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale; 10
The busy bee her honey now she mings.[3]
Winter is worn, that was the flowers' bale:
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs!
[1557]

From Astrophel and Stella

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

XXXI

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies!
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What, may it be that even in heav'nly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries!
Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes 5
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case,
I read it in thy looks: thy languished grace,
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.
Then, ev'n of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit? 10
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?

XXXIX

Come, Sleep! O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting-place[4] of wit, the balm of woe,

[1] *hung . . . pale*, shed his antlers upon the picket.
[2] swim. [3] mixes. [4] place of refreshment.

The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
Th' indifferent judge between the high and low;
With shield of proof shield me from out the prease[1] 5
Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw:
O make in me those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf of noise and blind of light, 10
A rosy garland and a weary head:
And if these things, as being thine in right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

[1591]

From To Delia

SAMUEL DANIEL

LIV

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,
  Brother to Death, in silent darkness born:
  Relieve my languish, and restore the light;
  With dark forgetting of my care, return!
And let the day be time enough to mourn 5
  The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth:
  Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn,
  Without the torment of the night's untruth.
Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires,
  To model forth the passions of the morrow; 10
  Never let rising sun approve you liars,
  To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain;
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

[1592]

[1] press, multitude.

Lyric Poetry

From Amoretti

EDMUND SPENSER

LXXV

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves, and washed it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.
Vain man, said she, that dost in vain assay 5
A mortal thing so to immortalize!
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eek my name be wiped out likewise.
Not so (quoth I) let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame: 10
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name;
Where, whenas death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

[1595]

Sonnets

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

XXIX

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope, 5
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee; and then my state, 10

Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
  For thy sweet love rememb'red such wealth brings
  That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

LXIV

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain 5
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay; 10
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
That Time will come and take my love away.
  This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
  But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

LXXIII

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day 5
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie, 10
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
  This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
  To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

CVI

When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rime
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights;
Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best, 5
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have expressed
Even such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring; 10
And, for they looked but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing:
  For we, which now behold these present days,
  Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

CXVI

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark 5
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come; 10
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
  If this be error and upon me proved,
  I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

[1609]

The Sonnet

From Idea

MICHAEL DRAYTON

LXI

Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part!
Nay, I have done; you get no more of me!
And I am glad, yea, glad, with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free.
Shake hands for ever! Cancel all our vows! 5
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain!
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies, 10
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes,—
  Now, if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
  From death to life thou might'st him yet recover!

[1619]

Death

JOHN DONNE

Death, be not proud, though some have callèd thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death; nor yet canst thou kill me.
From Rest and Sleep, which but thy pictures be, 5
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow;
And soonest our best men with thee do go—
Rest of their bones and souls' delivery!
Thou'rt slave to Fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell; 10
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die!
[1633]

Sonnets

JOHN MILTON

On his Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth 5
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even 10
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.
[1645]

On the Late Massacre in Piedmont

[The occasion of this sonnet was the expedition of the duke of Savoy against the Protestants of Savoy.]

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans 5
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans

The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow 10
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant[1]; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian[2] woe.

[1655; printed 1673]

On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days[3] in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent[4] which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present 5
My true account, lest He returning chide,
'Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?'
I fondly[5] ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best 10
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

[*c.* 1655; printed 1673]

To Mary Unwin

WILLIAM COWPER

Mary! I want a lyre with other strings,
Such aid from Heaven as some have feigned they drew,
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things;

[1] the Pope (from his tiara surrounded by three crowns).
[2] the woe prophesied for Babylon (here meaning the Church of Rome) on the Day of Judgment (Revelation xviii).
[3] Milton was forty-four when his blindness became total.
[4] An allusion to the parable of the talents (Matthew xxv).
[5] foolishly.

That, ere through age or woe I shed my wings, 5
I may record thy worth with honor due,
In verse as musical as thou art true,
Verse that immortalizes whom it sings;
But thou hast little need: there is a Book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light, 10
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
A chronicle of actions just and bright:
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine:
And, since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.
[1793]

Sonnets

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare, 5
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill; 10
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!
[1807]

'*It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free*'

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun

Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea: 5
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought, 10
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom[1] all the year;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.
[1807]

London, 1802

[The sonnet was composed when England was in great internal difficulty because of the insistent demand for more liberal government. Grave external danger also threatened from the rising power of Napolean. Milton had voiced his regard for liberty chiefly in his *Areopagitica*, 1644.]

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower 5
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: 10
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.
[1807]

[1] In heaven (as in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Luke xvi).

Lyric Poetry

'The World Is too Much With Us'

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon; 5
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn; 10
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus[1] rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton[1] blow his wreathèd horn.

[1807]

Sonnets

JOHN KEATS

On First looking into Chapman's Homer

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told 5
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken; 10
Or like stout Cortez[2] when with eagle eyes

[1] A Greek sea god. [2] Balboa, rather, the discoverer of the Pacific Ocean.

He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.
[1816]

'When I have Fears'

When I have fears that I may cease to be
  Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high pilèd books, in charact'ry,
  Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face, 5
  Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
  Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
  That I shall never look upon thee more, 10
Never have relish in the fairy power
  Of unreflecting love!—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.
[1818]

'Bright Star! Would I were Steadfast as Thou Art'

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
  Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
  Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task 5
  Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
  Of snow upon the mountains and the moors:
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
  Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast, 10
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
  Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.
[1820; printed 1848]

Shakespeare

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea, 5
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foiled searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at.—Better so! 11
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.
[1849]

From Sonnets from the Portuguese

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for naught
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
'I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought 5
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for

Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,— 10
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.
[1850]

From Divina Commedia

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

[The following sonnet is the first of six which Longfellow prefixed to parts of his translation of the *Divina Commedia.*]

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster[1] o'er; 5
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate, 10
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time[2] disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.
[1867]

From The House of Life

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

LXIII. INCLUSIVENESS

The changing guests, each in a different mood,
Sit at the roadside table and arise:

[1] the Lord's Prayer. [2] the American Civil War.

And every life among them in like wise
Is a soul's board set daily with new food.
What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood 5
How that face shall watch his when cold it lies?—
Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,
Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?

May not this ancient room thou sit'st in dwell
In separate living souls for joy or pain? 10
Nay, all its corners may be painted plain
Where Heaven shows pictures of some life spent well;
And may be stamped, a memory all in vain,
Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.
[1881]

Hélas!

OSCAR WILDE

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll 5
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance 10
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?
[1881]

The Sonnet

Lucifer in Starlight[1]

George Meredith

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their specter of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those. 5
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe, 10
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.
[1883]

The Sonnet

Richard Watson Gilder

What is a sonnet? 'Tis the pearly shell
That murmurs of the far-off murmuring sea;
A precious jewel carved most curiously;
It is a little picture painted well.
What is a sonnet? 'Tis the tear that fell 5
From a great poet's hidden ecstasy;
A two-edged sword, a star, a song—ah me!
Sometimes a heavy-tolling funeral bell.
This was the flame that shook with Dante's breath;
The solemn organ whereon Milton played, 10
And the clear glass where Shakespeare's shadow falls:
A sea this is—beware who ventureth!

[1] By the courtesy of Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, and Messrs. Constable & Company, Ltd., London.

For like a fiord the narrow floor is laid
Mid-ocean deep to the sheer mountain walls.
[1885]

The Flight

LLOYD MIFFLIN

Upon a cloud among the stars we stood:
The angel raised his hand, and looked, and said,
'Which world, of all yon starry myriad,
Shall we make wing to?' The still solitude
Became a harp whereon his voice and mood 5
Made spheral music round his haloed head.
I spake—for then I had not long been dead—
'Let me look round upon the vasts, and brood
A moment on these orbs ere I decide. . . .
What is yon lower star that beauteous shines, 10
And with soft splendor now incarnadines
Our wings?—*There* would I go and there abide.'
Then he, as one who some child's thought divines:
'That is the world where yesternight you died.'
[1897]

The Winds[1]

MADISON CAWEIN

Those hewers of the clouds, the Winds,—that lair
At the four compass-points,—are out tonight;
I hear their sandals trample on the height,
I hear their voices trumpet through the air:
Builders of storm, God's workmen, now they bear, 5
Up the steep stair of sky, on backs of might,
Huge tempest bulks, while,—sweat that blinds their sight,—
The rain is shaken from tumultuous hair:

[1] From *Poems*, by Madison Cawein. Copyright, 1911, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

Now, sweepers of the firmament, they broom,
Like gathered dust, the rolling mists along 10
Heaven's floors of sapphire; all the beautiful blue
Of skyey corridor and celestial room
Preparing, with large laughter and loud song,
For the white moon and stars to wander through.
[*c.* 1911]

The Soldier[1]

RUPERT BROOKE

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware, 5
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less 10
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.
[1915]

[1] Used by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

The Artificial French Forms

Akin to the sonnet are the "artificial French forms," found chiefly in the courtly poetry of Chaucer's time and in the conscious revival of the forms during the past half-century.

In mood they are sometimes playful and sophisticated, sometimes full of serious reminiscence and real emotion. In form, since they are based on the repetition of a few rime sounds and one or more refrain lines, they are intensely unified. To be attractive, they must be written with an exquisite lightness of touch, so that their monotony becomes musical and pleasing.

The triolet, briefest and slightest of these forms, is a lyric of eight lines with only two rime sounds. The first two lines are repeated as the last two, and the first line is also repeated as the fourth.

The rondel has either thirteen or fourteen lines with two rime sounds. The first two lines form the refrain, reappearing as the seventh and eighth; and the poem is closed by one or both of these. A variation, which Swinburne invented and called the roundel, has nine long lines, with the first words of the first line reappearing after the third and ninth lines as a refrain. Symons uses a shorter and simpler line than that devised by Swinburne.

The rondeau has thirteen lines with two rime sounds, with an additional unrimed refrain, taken from the beginning of the first line, repeated after the eighth and thirteenth lines.

The villanelle is a poem of six stanzas, five of three lines each and the last one of four, with two rime sounds throughout. The first line is a refrain, repeated as the sixth, the twelfth, and the eighteenth line. The third line is also repeated as the ninth, the fifteenth, and the nineteenth. The form, originally used for simple, pastoral subjects, tends toward monotony, but it is capable of tender musical effect.

The ballade is the longest, least artificial, and most significant of these French forms. It consists of three stanzas of either eight or ten lines, followed by an envoy in four or five. The envoy serves for both dedication and conclusion of the poem. The last line of the first stanza forms the refrain, which is repeated as the last line of every stanza and of the envoy. Of the ballades given here, the one by Henley is of the typical form. Rossetti uses more rime sounds than the stricter form permits.

The Ballade

The Ballad of Dead Ladies

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

From François Villon

Tell me now in what hidden way is
  Lady Flora[1] the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia,[2] and where is Thais,[3]
  Neither of them the fairer woman?
  Where is Echo, beheld of no man, 5
Only heard on river and mere,—

[1] A famous Roman beauty of the first century.
[2] Probably a beautiful Greek woman.
[3] The mistress of Alexander.

She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloïse,[1] the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween, 10
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From Love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan[2] should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . . 15
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche,[3] like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot,[4] Beatrice,[5] Alice,[6]
And Ermengarde[7] the lady of Maine,— 20
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord, 25
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword,—
'But where are the snows of yester-year?'
[1881]

[1] A French woman of the twelfth century, of rare intellectual gifts, beloved of Abélard, scholar and theologian.

[2] The chief person in an obscure and mysterious story of the Middle Ages, first mentioned by Villon. According to one tradition he turned the tables on the pleasure-loving queen, who herself became the victim of the sack and the Seine.

[3] Blanche of Castile, mother of Saint Louis.

[4] "Berte aus grans piés," mother of Charlemagne.

[5] Probably Beatrice of Provence, daughter-in-law of Louis VIII.

[6] Perhaps Alice of Champagne (died 1206).

[7] Wife of the count of Anjou and mother of the count of Maine, who died in 1126.

Ballade of Dead Actors[1]

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Where are the passions they essayed,
And where the tears they made to flow?
Where the wild humors they portrayed
For laughing worlds to see and know?
Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe? 5
Sir Peter's[2] whims and Timon's[3] gall?
And Millamant[4] and Romeo?
Into the night go one and all.

Where are the braveries, fresh or frayed?
The plumes, the armors—friend and foe? 10
The cloth of gold, the rare brocade,
The mantles glittering to and fro?
The pomp, the pride, the royal show?
The cries of war and festival?
The youth, the grace, the charm, the glow? 15
Into the night go one and all.

The curtain falls, the play is played:
The Beggar packs beside the Beau;
The Monarch troops, and troops the Maid;
The Thunder huddles with the Snow.[5] 20
Where are the revelers high and low?
The clashing swords? The lover's call?
The dancers gleaming row on row?
Into the night go one and all.

[1] This poem was originally addressed to "E. J. H." In 1898 it was dedicated to Edward's memory: "I. M. *Edward John Henley (1861–1898)*."
[2] Sir Peter Teazle, in Sheridan's *The School for Scandal.*
[3] In Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens.*
[4] The heroine of Congreve's *The Way of the World.*
[5] The mechanics who manipulate the stage machines for thunder and snow.

ENVOY

Prince, in one common overthrow 25
The Hero tumbles with the Thrall:
As dust that drives, as straws that blow,
Into the night go one and all.
[*c.* 1888]

The Rondeau

'In After Days'[1]

AUSTIN DOBSON

In after days when grasses high
O'er-top the stone where I shall lie,
  Though ill or well the world adjust
  My slender claim to honored dust,
I shall not question or reply. 5

I shall not see the morning sky;
I shall not hear the night-wind sigh;
  I shall be mute, as all men must
    In after days!

But yet, now living, fain were I 10
That some one then should testify,
  Saying—'He held his pen in trust
  To Art, not serving shame or lust.'
Will none?—Then let my memory die
    In after days! 15
[1885]

'In Flanders Fields'[2]

JOHN MCCRAE

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,

[1] Used by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.
[2] From *In Flanders Fields and Other Poems*, by John McCrae. Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London.

That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below. 5

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe: 10
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields. 15

[1915]

The Rondel

'Before the Dawn'

SAMUEL MINTURN PECK

Before the dawn begins to glow,
A ghostly company I keep;
Across the silent room they creep,
The buried forms of friend and foe.
Amid the throng that come and go, 5
There are two eyes that make me weep;
Before the dawn begins to glow,
A ghostly company I keep.

Two dear dead eyes. I love them so!
They shine like starlight on the deep; 10
And often when I am asleep
They stoop and kiss me, bending low,
Beforé the dawn begins to glow.

[1886]

The Roundel

The Roundel

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

A roundel is wrought as a ring or a star-bright sphere,
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear
    A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught— 5
Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance of rapture or fear—
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear, 10
    A roundel is wrought.

[1883]

A Roundel of Rest

ARTHUR SYMONS

If rest is sweet at shut of day
  For tired hands and tired feet,
How sweet at last to rest for aye,
        If rest is sweet!

We work or work not through the heat: 5
  Death bids us soon our labors lay
In lands where night and twilight meet.

When the last dawns are fallen gray
  And all life's toil and ease complete,
They know who work, not they who play, 10
        If rest is sweet.

The Triolet

A Kiss[1]

AUSTIN DOBSON

Rose kissed me today.
  Will she kiss me tomorrow?
Let it be as it may,
Rose kissed me today.
But the pleasure gives way 5
  To a savor of sorrow;—
Rose kissed me today,—
  Will she kiss me tomorrow?

'A Pitcher of Mignonette'

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER

A pitcher of mignonette
  In a tenement's highest casement:
Queer sort of flower-pot—yet
That pitcher of mignonette
Is a garden in heaven set, 5
  To the little sick child in the basement—
The pitcher of mignonette,
  In the tenement's highest casement.
[1884]

Triolet

'When First We Met'

ROBERT BRIDGES

When first we met we did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master;
Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess.

[1] Used by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

Who could foretell this sore distress, 5
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met?—We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.
[1890]

The Villanelle

Villanelle

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

A dainty thing's the Villanelle,
  Sly, musical, a jewel in rime,
It serves its purpose passing well.

A double-clappered silver bell
  That must be made to clink in chime, 5
A dainty thing's the Villanelle;

And if you wish to flute a spell,
  Or ask a meeting 'neath the lime,
It serves its purpose passing well.

You must not ask of it the swell 10
  Of organs grandiose and sublime—
A dainty thing's the Villanelle;

And, filled with sweetness, as a shell
  Is filled with sound, and launched in time,
It serves its purpose passing well. 15

Still fair to see and good to smell
  As in the quaintness of its prime,
A dainty thing's the Villanelle,
It serves its purpose passing well.
[1888]

The Ode

An ode is the most stately and elaborate form of lyrical verse. It deals with an idea or an occasion of unusual impressiveness, usually public or civic rather than personal. Some critics have denied the name to the odes of Keats, on the ground that their emotion is of a personal character; but it might be urged that the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" deals less with the poet's own feelings than with the permanence of beauty in the world.

In structure, odes are of three kinds. The Pindaric ode, named from the Greek poet Pindar, is built up by a series of three different stanzas (the strophe, or turn; the antistrophe, or counter-turn; and the epode, or stand). Similar groups of three stanzas, exactly resembling the first three in verse form, can be added indefinitely. The Pindaric ode is very famous, but it is rarely used with success in English for two reasons:

(1) Its pattern, designed for recitation by a chorus to the accompaniment of music and dancing, is too intricate to be followed when it is read aloud with no illustrative action.

(2) Its form, which is hardly understood today even by scholars, serves no good purpose in modern poetry. The poets who have imitated it have rarely succeeded in copying its form correctly, and have almost always missed its spirit. Such an ode in English is an expression of learning and industry rather than of poetic feeling. The Pindaric ode has great historical importance, but it has ceased to be a living poetic form.

A second type is the homostrophic ode, in which one stanza is repeated with little or no variation of metrical form. Sometimes, especially when the stanzas are of four lines each, this form is called the Horatian ode, after the Roman poet Horace, who termed some of his lyrics odes.

A third type, one of very great importance in English poetry, is the free ode, or false Pindaric. This originated with the English poet Cowley, who, misunderstanding the intricate regularity of the odes of Pindar, thought that they were highly irregular, with changes of line and stanza to suit every change of mood. The free ode has given rise to a great deal of confused and slovenly verse; but in the hands of masters, dealing with subjects so closely knit as to give unity to the verse, this loose form has resulted in some of the finest odes in the language. Among the best of these are Dryden's "Alexander's Feast" and Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality."

The term "ode" is sometimes loosely used as a name for a short song, or for any kind of lyric, or even for a burlesque, as Gray's ode "On the Death of a Favorite Cat."

A Pindaric Ode

To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of that Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison

BEN JONSON

[Sir Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland (1610–1643), poet, statesman, and soldier, was one of the younger friends of Ben Jonson. Between him and Sir Henry Morison there existed the notable friendship celebrated in this ode inspired by Morison's death, in 1629. Falkland, killed at the battle of Newbury, was one of the noblest of the Cavaliers. Waller, Suckling, and Cowley mourned his death.]

The Ode

I

The Strophe, or Turn

Brave infant of Saguntum,[1] clear
Thy coming forth in that great year,
When the prodigious Hannibal did crown
His rage with razing your immortal town.
Thou looking then about, 5
Ere thou wert half got out,
Wise child, didst hastily return,
And mad'st thy mother's womb thine urn.
How summed a circle didst thou leave mankind
Of deepest lore, could we the center find! 10

The Antistrophe, or Counter-turn

Did wiser nature draw thee back,
From out the horror of that sack;
Where shame, faith, honor, and regard of right,
Lay trampled on? the deeds of death and night
Urged, hurried forth, and hurled 15
Upon the affrighted world;
Fire, famine, and fell fury met,
And all on utmost ruin set:
As, could they but life's miseries foresee,
No doubt all infants would return like thee. 20

The Epode, or Stand

For what is life, if measured by the space,
Not by the act?
Or masked man, if valued by his face,
Above his fact[2]?
Here's one outlived his peers 25
And told forth fourscore years:

[1] A city in Spain, captured by Hannibal in 219 B.C. For the story referred to see Pliny's *Natural History*, VII, iii.
[2] deeds.

He vexed time, and busied the whole state;
Troubled both foes and friends;
But ever to no ends:
What did this stirrer but die late? 30
How well at twenty had he fallen or stood!
For three of his four score he did no good.

II

THE STROPHE, OR TURN

He entered well by virtuous parts,
Got up, and thrived with honest arts,
He purchased[1] friends, and fame, and honors then, 35
And had his noble name advanced with men;
But weary of that flight,
He stooped in all men's sight
To sordid flatteries, acts of strife,
And sunk in that dead sea of life, 40
So deep, as he did then death's waters sup,
But that the cork of title buoyed him up.

THE ANTISTROPHE, OR COUNTER-TURN

Alas! but Morison fell young:
He never fell,—thou fall'st, my tongue.
He stood a soldier to the last right end, 45
A perfect patriot and a noble friend;
But most, a virtuous son.
All offices[2] were done
By him, so ample, full, and round,
In weight, in measure, number, sound, 50
As, though his age imperfect might appear,
His life was of humanity the sphere.[3]

THE EPODE, OR STAND

Go now, and tell[4] our days summed up with fears,
And make them years;

[1] acquired. [2] services. [3] completed whole. [4] count.

Produce thy mass of miseries on the stage, 55
To swell thine age;
Repeat of things a throng,
To show thou hast been long,
Not lived; for life doth her great actions spell,
By what was done and wrought 60
In season, and so brought
To light: her measures are, how well
Each syllabe answered, and was formed, how fair:
These make the lines of life, and that's her air!

III

THE STROPHE, OR TURN

It is not growing like a tree 65
In bulk, doth make men better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear:
A lily of a day,
Is fairer far, in May, 70
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures, life may perfect be.

THE ANTISTROPHE, OR COUNTER-TURN

Call, noble Lucius, then, for wine, 75
And let thy locks with gladness shine;
Accept this Garland, plant it on thy head,
And think, nay know, thy Morison's not dead.
He leaped the present age,
Possest with holy rage, 80
To see that bright eternal day;
Of which we priests and poets say
Such truths as we expect for happy men:
And there he lives with memory and Ben—

THE EPODE, OR STAND

Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went, 85
Himself, to rest,
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have exprest,
In this bright asterism[1]!—
Where it were friendship's schism, 90
Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry,
To separate these twi-
Lights, the Dioscuri[2];
And keep the one half from his Harry.
But fate doth so alternate the design, 95
Whilst that in heaven, this light on earth must shine,—

IV

THE STROPHE, OR TURN

And shine as you exalted are;
Two names of friendship, but one star:
Of hearts the union, and those not by chance
Made, or indenture, or leased out t'advance 100
The profits for a time.
No pleasures vain did chime,
Of rimes, or riots, at your feasts,
Orgies of drink, or feigned protests;
But simple love of greatness and of good, 105
That knits brave minds and manners more than blood.

THE ANTISTROPHE, OR COUNTER-TURN

This made you first to know the why
You liked, then after, to apply
That liking; and approach so one the t'other,
Till either grew a portion of the other; 110

[1] constellation.
[2] Castor and Pollux, twin sons of Leda and Zeus, placed together in the heavens as a reward for their brotherly constancy.

Each styled by his end,
The copy of his friend.
You lived to be the great sir-names
And titles by which all made claims
Unto the Virtue: nothing perfect done, 115
But as a Cary or a Morison.

THE EPODE, OR STAND

And such a force the fair example had,
As they that saw
The good, and durst not practice it, were glad
That such a law 120
Was left yet to mankind;
Where they might read and find
Friendship, indeed, was written not in words;
And with the heart, not pen,
Of two so early men, 125
Whose lines her rolls were, and records;
Who, ere the first down bloomed on the chin,
Had sowed these fruits, and got the harvest in.
[1629; printed 1640]

Alexander's Feast; or, the Power of Music

A Song in Honor of St. Cecilia's Day, 1697

JOHN DRYDEN

'Twas at the royal feast for Persia won
By Philip's warlike son[1]:
Aloft in awful state
The godlike hero sate
On his imperial throne; 5
His valiant peers were placed around;
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound:
(So should desert in arms be crowned.)

[1] Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon.

The lovely Thais,[1] by his side,
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride 10
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair. 15

CHORUS

Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

Timotheus,[2] placed on high 20
Amid the tuneful choir,
With flying fingers touched the lyre:
The trembling notes ascend the sky,
And heavenly joys inspire.
The song began from Jove, 25
Who left his blissful seats above,
(Such is the power of mighty love)
A dragon's fiery form belied the god:
Sublime on radiant spires he rode,
When he to fair Olympia pressed; 30
And while he sought her snowy breast:
Then round her slender waist he curled,
And stamped an image of himself, a sovereign of the world.
The listening crowd admire the lofty sound;
A present deity, they shout around: 35
A present deity, the vaulted roofs rebound:
With ravished ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,

[1] Alexander's mistress. [2] A Greek musician.

Affects to nod, 40
And seems to shake the spheres.

CHORUS

With ravished ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod, 45
And seems to shake the spheres.

The praise of Bacchus then the sweet musician sung,
Of Bacchus ever fair and ever young.
The jolly god in triumph comes;
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums; 50
Flushed with a purple grace
He shows his honest face:
Now give the hautboys breath; he comes, he comes.
Bacchus, ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain; 55
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure;
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain. 60

CHORUS

Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure;
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain. 65

Soothed with the sound the king grew vain;
Fought all his battles o'er again;
And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the slain.
The master saw the madness rise,
His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes; 70

And while he heaven and earth defied,
Changed his hand, and checked his pride.
  He chose a mournful Muse,
  Soft pity to infuse:
He sung Darius[1] great and good, 75
  By too severe a fate,
Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,
  Fallen from his high estate,
And weltering in his blood;
Deserted at his utmost need 80
By those his former bounty fed;
On the bare earth exposed he lies,
  With not a friend to close his eyes.
With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,
  Revolving in his altered soul 85
    The various turns of chance below:
  And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
    And tears began to flow.

Chorus

Revolving in his altered soul
  The various turns of chance below; 90
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
  And tears began to flow.

The mighty master smiled to see
That love was in the next degree;
'Twas but a kindred sound to move, 95
For pity melts the mind to love.
  Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,[2]
  Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.
War, he sung, is toil and trouble;
Honor but an empty bubble; 100

[1] The Persian king conquered by Alexander, murdered by one of his former officers.

[2] soft, melting music.

Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying:
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, O think it worth enjoying:
Lovely Thais sits beside thee, 105
Take the good the gods provide thee.

The many rend the skies with loud applause;
So Love was crowned, but Music won the cause.
The prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gazed on the fair 110
Who caused his care,
And sighed and looked, sighed and looked,
Sighed and looked, and sighed again;
At length, with love and wine at once oppressed,
The vanquished victor sunk upon her breast. 115

Chorus

The prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sighed and looked, sighed and looked,
Sighed and looked, and sighed again; 120
At length, with love and wine at once oppressed,
The vanquished victor sunk upon her breast.

Now strike the golden lyre again;
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.
Break his bands of sleep asunder, 125
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark, the horrid sound
Has raised up his head;
As awaked from the dead,
And, amazed, he stares around. 130
'Revenge, revenge!' Timotheus cries;
'See the Furies arise:

See the snakes that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair,
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes! 135
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious[1] on the plain: 140
Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew.
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods.' 145
The princes applaud with a furious joy;
And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy;
Thais led the way,[2]
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy. 150

CHORUS

And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy;
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.

Thus long ago, 155
Ere heaving bellows learned to blow,
While organs yet were mute,
Timotheus, to his breathing flute
And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire. 160
At last divine Cecilia[3] came,

[1] According to ancient Greek belief, the souls of the unburied dead might wander a hundred years before being allowed to cross the Styx to the regions of the dead.

[2] There is a legend to that effect.

[3] The patron saint of music, traditionally inventor of the organ.

Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds, 165
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown:
He raised a mortal to the skies;
She drew an angel down.[1] 170

GRAND CHORUS

At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds, 175
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown:
He raised a mortal to the skies;
She drew an angel down. 180

[1697]

Ode to Evening

WILLIAM COLLINS

If aught of oaten stop,[2] or pastoral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to sooth thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs and dying gales,

O nymph reserv'd, while now the bright-hair'd sun 5
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,

[1] An angel visited St. Cecilia.
[2] Music from an oaten shepherd's pipe (the usual instrument in pastoral poetry).

With brede[1] ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed:

Now air is hush'd, save where the weak-ey'd bat,
With short shrill shriek, flits by on leathern wing, 10
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path,
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum:
Now teach me, maid compos'd, 15
To breathe some soften'd strain,

Whose numbers, stealing thro' thy dark'ning vale
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As, musing slow, I hail
Thy genial lov'd return! 20

For when thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours, and elves
Who slept in flow'rs the day,

And many a nymph who wreaths her brows with sedge,
And sheds the fresh'ning dew, and, lovelier still, 26
The pensive Pleasures sweet,
Prepare thy shadowy car.

Then lead, calm vot'ress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile 30
Or upland fallows gray
Reflect its last cool gleam.

But when chill blust'ring winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side 35
Views wilds, and swelling floods,

[1] ornament.

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
  Thy dewy fingers draw
  The gradual dusky veil. 40

While Spring shall pour his show'rs, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve;
  While Summer loves to sport
  Beneath thy ling'ring light;

While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves; 45
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
  Affrights thy shrinking train,
  And rudely rends thy robes;

So long, sure-found beneath the sylvan shed,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipped Health, 50
  Thy gentlest influence own,
  And hymn thy fav'rite name!

Ode

Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
  To me did seem
  Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream. 5
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
  Turn whereso'er I may,
  By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

The Rainbow comes and goes, 10
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair; 15
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound 20
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief;
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep; 25
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea 30
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy! 35

IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;

My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal, 40
The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling 45
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear! 50
—But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat: 55
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting, 60
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home: 65
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy; 70
The Youth, who daily farther from the east

Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away, 75
And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim, 80
The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses, 85
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart, 90
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart, 95
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside, 100
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part;

Filling from time to time his 'humorous[1] stage'
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage; 105
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep 110
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest, 115
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by; 120
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife? 125
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live, 130
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

[1] Pertaining to the "humors," or moods, of men, as in Ben Jonson's plays.

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest; 135
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise; 140
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realized, 145
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may, 150
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake, 155
To perish never:
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy! 160
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither, 165
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound! 170
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright 175
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind; 180
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death, 185
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight 190
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet; 195
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.

Thanks to the human heart by which we live, 200
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.
[1807]

Ode to a Nightingale

JOHN KEATS

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
  My sense, as though of hemlock[1] I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
  One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, 5
  But being too happy in thine happiness,—
    That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
      In some melodious plot
  Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
    Singest of summer in full-throated ease. 10

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
  Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
  Dance, and Provençal[2] song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South, 15
  Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,[3]
    With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
      And purple-stained mouth;
  That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
    And with thee fade away into the forest dim: 20

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
  What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret

[1] A poison, used in ancient Athens as a death potion for criminals.
[2] Of Provence, a region in southeastern France.
[3] A spring upon Mount Helicon, sacred to the Muses.

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs, 25
Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow. 30

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,[1]
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night, 35
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown 39
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild; 45
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. 50

Darkling[2] I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rime,
To take into the air my quiet breath;

[1] leopards that drew the chariot of Bacchus.
[2] in the dark.

Now more than ever seems it rich to die, 55
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod. 60

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path 65
Through the sad heart of Ruth,[1] when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. 70

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades 75
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep? 80

[1819]

Ode on a Grecian Urn

JOHN KEATS

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

[1] See the book of Ruth, in the Old Testament.

The Ode

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rime:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape 5
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?[1]
What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? 10

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave 15
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair! 20

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu:
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love! 25
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue. 30

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

[1] Tempe is a valley near Mount Olympus, and Arcadia a region in southern Greece which is regarded as ideally rustic.

What little town by river or sea shore, 35
  Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
    Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
  Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
    Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. 40

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede[1]
  Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
  Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral[2]! 45
  When old age shall this generation waste,
    Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
  Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all
    Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. 50
[1820]

Ode to the West Wind

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

[This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapors which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.—SHELLEY]

I

O, wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

[1] braid, garland. [2] See the discussion of pastoral poetry, p. 341.

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou, 5
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill 10
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed, 16
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head 20

Of some fierce Mænad,[1] even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night[2]
Will be the dome of a vast sepulcher, 25
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: O, hear!

[1] A priestess of Bacchus.
[2] this night now closing down.

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay, 30
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,[1]
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers 35
So sweet the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean know 40

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: O, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share 45

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O, uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skyey speed 50
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

[1] The Bay of Baja, west of Naples.

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed 55
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone, 60
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse, 65

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? 70
[1820]

The Dramatic Lyric and the Dramatic Monologue

As the modern novel has developed out of the older romances and tales through a deepening analysis of human character, poetry has also tended increasingly to analyze character rather than to narrate action or to express personal emotion alone.

Robert Browning adopted the term "dramatic lyrics" as a heading for a group of his poems in 1842, explaining that the poems were, "though for the most part Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine."

The dramatic lyric and the dramatic monologue are forms used by most modern poets of note; they are perhaps the most characteristic contribution that the last century has made to poetry. Modern writers, who in the song or the drama or the simple narrative are usually inferior to older poets, are supreme in this type.

The dramatic lyric presents a situation, and perhaps an action, through the words of the character concerned, as seen through his eyes and interpreted by his experience of life. Browning's "Saul" (especially in the earlier form, as given here) is a fine example of this class.

The dramatic monologue differs from the dramatic lyric in two ways: it is more often in dramatic blank verse than in lyrical measures, and it usually suggests the presence of one or more persons besides the speaker. The finest dramatic monologues interpret the speaker in his relation to

others, whose personalities are sometimes as fully portrayed as that of the speaker. The dramatic monologue has been compared to a telephone conversation, in which we hear only one of the voices, or to a play on a darkened stage, in which we hear one speaker and surmise the presence of the others.

The poems which follow are all excellent in their different kinds, but they are not all true dramatic monologues. Tennyson's "Ulysses" is a soliloquy; even the concluding appeal to the comrades is hardly more than Ulysses thinking aloud. "The Forsaken Merman" is a dramatic lyric in which the children take no active part. "The Bishop Orders his Tomb," however, is constantly modified by the nearness of the tomb of Gandolf and by the attitude of the bystanders.

As the biographers and historians of our generation have tended to reinterpret the past, the poets have been more interested in human motive than in human achievement, and have constantly sought to find the man behind the event. Sometimes this results in nothing more than mud slinging, or at best in depreciation of the past. Sometimes, as in "The Bishop Orders his Tomb," it gives a human interpretation of an historical epoch. Sometimes it gives to the ancient hero the thoughts and feelings of our own age, as in Tennyson's "Ulysses." It is fitting that in Exeter Cathedral, upon the memorial to the heroic Captain Scott, the English explorer of the Antarctic, there should be engraved the concluding line from "Ulysses":

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Ulysses

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

[The poem is founded primarily upon the Odyssey, but in some details on Dante's *Inferno*, XXVI, particularly lines 94–103, ". . . neither fondness for my son, nor reverence for my aged father, nor the due love that should have cheered Penelope, could conquer in me the ardor that I had to gain experience of the world, and of human vice and worth; I put forth on the deep open sea, with but one ship, and with that small company, which had not deserted me."—Tr. CARLYLE]

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me. 5
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades 10
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known,—cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all,— 15
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met.
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades 20
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me 25
Little remains: but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire 30
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
  This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill 35
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail 40
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
  There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners, 45
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil; 50
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep 55
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths 60
Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,[1]
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' 65
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are,—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 70
[1842]

My Last Duchess

Ferrara

ROBERT BROWNING

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said 5
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps 15
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff

[1] The Isles of the Blest, often associated by the ancients with the imperfectly known islands of the Atlantic.

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast, 25
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill 35
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark'—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; 45
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense 50
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, 55
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

[1842]

The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church

Rome, 15—

ROBERT BROWNING

[St. Praxed's is one of the minor churches of Rome. The Bishop and other persons of the poem are of Browning's invention. Ruskin says, "I know no other piece of modern English prose or poetry in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin."]

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was! 5
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie 10
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
'Do I live, am I dead?' Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought 15
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence 20

One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,[1]
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aëry dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there, 25
And 'neath my tabernacle[2] take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble[3] all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse. 30
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,[4]
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig 36
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft, 40
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,[5]
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,[6]
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast. . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all, 45
That brave Frascati[7] villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst! 50

[1] The side from which the epistle is read.
[2] Here, a canopy over a tomb.
[3] An Italian marble used for decoration.
[4] A greenish-white Italian marble.
[5] olive basket.
[6] A semi-precious stone, azure-blue.
[7] A fashionable residence town south of Rome.

Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath? 55
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus,[1] with a vase or so,
The Savior at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan 60
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp 65
Bricked o'er with beggar's moldy travertine[2]
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve.
My bath must needs be left behind, alas! 70
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs? 75
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's[3] every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian[4] serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries, 80
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,[5]

[1] An emblem, resembling a spear thrust into a pine cone, pertaining to Bacchus.
[2] A porous light-yellow building stone.
[3] Cicero's, representing the classical period of Latin.
[4] A writer of Rome later than the classical period.
[5] As intoned by the priests.

And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night, 85
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,[1]
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work: 90
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount, 95
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT[2] quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best! 100
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul, 105
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a visor and a Term,[3]
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx[4]
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down, 110
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask

[1] The shepherd's crook of a bishop, symbolical of his care of his flock.
[2] He was distinguished. (The Latin is incorrect.)
[3] A mask, and a bust springing from a square pillar, representing Term, the Roman god of boundaries.
[4] An animal sacred to Bacchus.

'Do I live, am I dead?' There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone— 115
Gritstone,[1] a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs 120
—Aye, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf—at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was! 125
[1845]

Saul[2]

ROBERT BROWNING

[The background of Browning's poem is the first book of Samuel, in the Old Testament. Saul, the anointed king of Israel, a man of splendid physique and presence, is visited with black moods amounting at times to insanity. Moreover, he has disobeyed the God of Israel, and David, the shepherd lad, poet, and player upon the harp, has been anointed to fill Saul's place. In a fit of gloom Saul has withdrawn into his tent, and his servants have sent for David to relieve his melancholy with music. David eagerly uses his skill as an instrument of God for Saul's recovery. See especially 1 Samuel xvi, 14–23.]

I

Said Abner,[3] 'At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!' Then I wished it, and did kiss
his cheek.
And he, 'Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent

[1] Sandstone incapable of being polished.
[2] The poem was published in nine sections in 1845. Ten years later it was published in an expanded form, with nineteen sections. The shorter version is given here.
[3] The general of Saul's army.

Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet, 5
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit[1] have ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life. 10

II

'Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!'

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet, 15
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second inclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed. 20
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, 'Here is David, thy servant!' And no voice replied.
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight 25
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed Saul.

[1] The evil spirit which troubled Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the center, that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs, 31
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come[1]
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those sun-beams like swords! 35
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star 40
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa[2] a-musing outside his sand house— 45
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

[1] Until it casts its skin.
[2] A jumping mouse of the Old World deserts.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand 50
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—'Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here
To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!'—And then, the glad chaunt 55
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned. 60
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart 63
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires,[1] and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang:—

[1] Semi-transparent sapphires.

IX

'Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, "Let one more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all was for best"?
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true:
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;

And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go)
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them, —all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!'

[1845]

The Forsaken Merman

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Come, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below!
Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away!
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
'Margaret! Margaret!'
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
Children's voices, wild with pain—
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
'Mother dear, we cannot stay!
The wild white horses foam and fret.'
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more!
One last look at the white-walled town, 25
And the little gray church on the windy shore;
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day;
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday 30
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep, 35
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground; 40
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye? 45
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me, 50
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell. 54
She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea;
She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray

In the little gray church on the shore today,
'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee.'
I said: 'Go up, dear heart, through the waves; 60
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!'
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan; 65
Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they say;
Come!' I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still, 70
To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climbed on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear: 76
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'
But, ah, she gave me never a look, 80
For her eyes were sealed to the holy book!
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more!
Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down! 85
Down to the depths of the sea!
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: 'O joy, O joy, 89

For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun!'
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully, 95
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare; 100
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh 105
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away, children;
Come children, come down!
The hoarse wind blows coldly; 110
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar. 115
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing: 'Here came a mortal, 120
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow, 125
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starred with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly 130
On the blanched sands a gloom;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry. 135
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down.
Singing: 'There dwells a loved one, 140
But cruel is she!
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.'
[1849]

What the Bullet Sang

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

O joy of creation
To be!
O rapture to fly
And be free!
Be the battle lost or won, 5
Though its smoke shall hide the sun,
I shall find my love,—the one
Born for me!

I shall know him where he stands,
All alone, 10

With the power in his hands
Not o'erthrown;
I shall know him by his face,
By his godlike front and grace;
I shall hold him for a space, 15
All my own!

It is he—O my love!
So bold!
It is I—all thy love
Foretold! 20
It is I. O love! what bliss!
Dost thou answer to my kiss?
O sweetheart! what is this
Lieth there so cold?

[*c.* 1870]

From Spoon River Anthology[1]

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

Anne Rutledge

Out of me unworthy and unknown
The vibrations of deathless music;
'With malice toward none, with charity for all.'
Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions,
And the beneficent face of a nation 5
Shining with justice and truth.
I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation. 10
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom!

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Lucinda Matlock

I went to the dances at Chandlerville,
And played snap-out at Winchester.
One time we changed partners,
Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,
And then I found Davis. 5
We were married and lived together for seventy years,
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,
Eight of whom we lost
Ere I had reached the age of sixty.
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick, 10
I made the garden, and for holiday
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all, 16
And passed to a sweet repose.
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters, 20
Life is too strong for you—
It takes life to love Life.

Benjamin Pantier

Together in this grave lie Benjamin Pantier, attorney at law,
And Nig, his dog, constant companion, solace and friend.
Down the gray road, friends, children, men and women,
Passing one by one out of life, left me till I was alone
With Nig for partner, bed-fellow, comrade in drink. 5
In the morning of life I knew aspiration and saw glory.
Then she, who survives me, snared my soul
With a snare which bled me to death,
Till I, once strong of will, lay broken, indifferent,

Living with Nig in a room back of a dingy office. 10
Under my jaw-bone is snuggled the bony nose of Nig—
Our story is lost in silence. Go by, mad world!

Mrs. Benjamin Pantier

I know that he told that I snared his soul
With a snare which bled him to death.
And all the men loved him,
And most of the women pitied him.
But suppose you are really a lady, and have delicate tastes,
And loathe the smell of whisky and onions. 6
And the rhythm of Wordsworth's 'Ode' runs in your ears,
While he goes about from morning till night
Repeating bits of that common thing:
'Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?' 10
And then, suppose:
You are a woman well endowed,
And the only man with whom the law and morality
Permit you to have the marital relation
Is the very man that fills you with disgust 15
Every time you think of it—while you think of it
Every time you see him?
That's why I drove him away from home
To live with his dog in a dingy room
Back of his office. 20

Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford[1]

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

You are a friend then, as I make it out,
Of our man Shakespeare, who alone of us
Will put an ass's head in Fairyland
As he would add a shilling to more shillings,

[1] From *The Man Against the Sky*, by Edwin Arlington Robinson. Copyright, 1916, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

All most harmonious,—and out of his 5
Miraculous inviolable increase
Fills Ilion, Rome, or any town you like
Of olden time with timeless Englishmen;
And I must wonder what you think of him—
All you down there where your small Avon flows 10
By Stratford, and where you're an Alderman.
Some, for a guess, would have him riding back
To be a farrier there, or say a dyer;
Or maybe one of your adept surveyors;
Or like enough the wizard of all tanners. 15
Not you—no fear of that; for I discern
In you a kindling of the flame that saves—
The nimble element, the true caloric;
I see it, and was told of it, moreover,
By our discriminate friend himself, no other. 20
Had you been one of the sad average,
As he would have it,—meaning, as I take it,
The sinew and the solvent of our Island,
You'd not be buying beer for this Terpander's[1]
Approved and estimated friend Ben Jonson; 25
He'd never foist it as a part of his
Contingent entertainment of a townsman
While he goes off rehearsing, as he must,
If he shall ever be the Duke of Stratford.
And my words are no shadow on your town— 30
Far from it; for one town's as like another
As all are unlike London. Oh, he knows it,—
And there's the Stratford in him; he denies it,
And there's the Shakespeare in him. So, God help him!
I tell him he needs Greek; but neither God 35
Nor Greek will help him. Nothing will help that man.
You see the fates have given him so much,
He must have all or perish,—or look out

[1] Terpander, Greek musician and poet, 7th century B.C. Here, Shakespeare.

Of London, where he sees too many lords.
They're part of half what ails him: I suppose 40
There's nothing fouler down among the demons
Than what it is he feels when he remembers
The dust and sweat and ointment of his calling
With his lords looking on and laughing at him.
King as he is, he can't be king *de facto*, 45
And that's as well, because he wouldn't like it;
He'd frame a lower rating of men then
Than he has now; and after that would come
An abdication or an apoplexy.
He can't be king, not even king of Stratford,— 50
Though half the world, if not the whole of it,
May crown him with a crown that fits no king
Save Lord Apollo's homesick emissary:
Not there on Avon, or on any stream
Where Naiads and their white arms are no more, 55
Shall he find home again. It's all too bad.
But there's a comfort, for he'll have that House—
The best you ever saw; and he'll be there
Anon, as you're an Alderman. Good God!
He makes me lie awake o' nights and laugh. 60

And you have known him from his origin,
You tell me; and a most uncommon urchin
He must have been to the few seeing ones—
A trifle terrifying, I dare say,
Discovering a world with his man's eyes, 65
Quite as another lad might see some finches,
If he looked hard and had an eye for nature.
But this one had his eyes and their foretelling,
And he had you to fare with, and what else?
He must have had a father and a mother— 70
In fact I've heard him say so—and a dog,
As a boy should, I venture; and the dog,

Most likely, was the only man who knew him.
A dog, for all I know, is what he needs
As much as anything right here today, 75
To counsel him about his disillusions,
Old aches, and parturitions of what's coming,—
A dog of orders, an emeritus,
To wag his tail at him when he comes home,
And then to put his paws up on his knees 80
And say, 'For God's sake, what's it all about?'

I don't know whether he needs a dog or not—
Or what he needs. I tell him he needs Greek;
I'll talk of rules and Aristotle with him,
And if his tongue's at home he'll say to that, 85
'I have your word that Aristotle knows,
And you mine that I don't know Aristotle.'
He's all at odds with all the unities,
And what's yet worse, it doesn't seem to matter;
He treads along through Time's old wilderness 90
As if the tramp of all the centuries
Had left no roads—and there are none, for him;
He doesn't see them, even with those eyes,—
And that's a pity, or I say it is.
Accordingly we have him as we have him— 95
Going his way, the way that he goes best,
A pleasant animal with no great noise
Or nonsense anywhere to set him off—
Save only divers and inclement devils
Have made of late his heart their dwelling place. 100
A flame half ready to fly out sometimes
At some annoyance may be fanned up in him,
But soon it falls, and when it falls goes out;
He knows how little room there is in there
For crude and futile animosities, 105
And how much for the joy of being whole,

And how much for long sorrow and old pain.
On our side there are some who may be given
To grow old wondering what he thinks of us
And some above us, who are, in his eyes, 110
Above himself,—and that's quite right and English.
Yet here we smile, or disappoint the gods
Who made it so: the gods have always eyes
To see men scratch; and they see one down here
Who itches, manor-bitten to the bone, 115
Albeit he knows himself—yes, yes, he knows—
The lord of more than England and of more
Than all the seas of England in all time
Shall ever wash. D'ye wonder that I laugh?
He sees me, and he doesn't seem to care; 120
And why the devil should he? I can't tell you.

I'll meet him out alone of a bright Sunday,
Trim, rather spruce, and quite the gentleman.
'What ho, my lord!' say I. He doesn't hear me;
Wherefore I have to pause and look at him. 125
He's not enormous, but one looks at him.
A little on the round if you insist,
For now, God save the mark, he's growing old;
He's five and forty, and to hear him talk
These days you'd call him eighty; then you'd add 130
More years to that. He's old enough to be
The father of a world, and so he is.
'Ben, you're a scholar, what's the time of day?'
Says he; and there shines out of him again
An aged light that has no age or station— 135
The mystery that's his—a mischievous
Half-mad serenity that laughs at fame
For being won so easy, and at friends
Who laugh at him for what he wants the most,
And for his dukedom down in Warwickshire;— 140

By which you see we're all a little jealous. . . .
Poor Greene! I fear the color of his name
Was even as that of his ascending soul;
And he was one where there are many others,—
Some scrivening to the end against their fate, 145
Their puppets all in ink and all to die there;
And some with hands that once would shade an eye
That scanned Euripides and Æschylus
Will reach by this time for a pot-house mop
To slush their first and last of royalties. 150
Poor devils! and they all play to his hand;
For so it was in Athens and old Rome.
But that's not here or there; I've wandered off.
Greene does it, or I'm careful. Where's that boy?

Yes, he'll go back to Stratford. And we'll miss him? 155
Dear sir, there'll be no London here without him.
We'll all be riding, one of these fine days,
Down there to see him—and his wife won't like us;
And then we'll think of what he never said
Of women—which, if taken all in all 160
With what he did say, would buy many horses.
Though nowadays he's not so much for women:
'So few of them,' he says, 'are worth the guessing.'
But there's a worm at work when he says that,
And while he says it one feels in the air 165
A deal of circumambient hocus-pocus.
They've had him dancing till his toes were tender,
And he can feel 'em now, come chilly rains.
There's no long cry for going into it,
However, and we don't know much about it. 170
But you in Stratford, like most here in London,
Have more now in the *Sonnets* than you paid for;
He's put one there with all her poison on,
To make a singing fiction of a shadow

That's in his life a fact, and always will be. 175
But she's no care of ours, though Time, I fear,
Will have a more reverberant ado
About her than about another one
Who seems to have decoyed him, married him,
And sent him scuttling on his way to London,— 180
With much already learned, and more to learn,
And more to follow. Lord! how I see him now,
Pretending, maybe trying, to be like us.
Whatever he may have meant, we never had him;
He failed us, or escaped, or what you will,— 185
And there was that about him (God knows what,—
We'd flayed another had he tried it on us)
That made as many of us as had wits
More fond of all his easy distances
Than one another's noise and clap-your-shoulder. 190
But think you not, my friend, he'd never talk!
Talk? He was eldritch at it; and we listened—
Thereby acquiring much we knew before
About ourselves, and hitherto had held
Irrelevant, or not prime to the purpose. 195
And there were some, of course, and there be now,
Disordered and reduced amazedly
To resignation by the mystic seal
Of young finality the gods had laid
On everything that made him a young demon; 200
And one or two shot looks at him already
As he had been their executioner;
And once or twice he was, not knowing it,—
Or knowing, being sorry for poor clay
And saying nothing. . . . Yet, for all his engines, 205
You'll meet a thousand of an afternoon
Who strut and sun themselves and see around 'em
A world made out of more that has a reason
Than his, I swear, that he sees here today;

Though he may scarcely give a Fool an exit 210
But we mark how he sees in everything
A law that, given we flout it once too often,
Brings fire and iron down on our naked heads.
To me it looks as if the power that made him,
For fear of giving all things to one creature, 215
Let out the first,—faith, innocence, illusion,
Whatever 'tis that keeps us out o' Bedlam,—
And thereby, for his too consuming vision,
Empowered him out of nature; though to see him,
You'd never guess what's going on inside him. 220
He'll break out some day like a keg of ale
With too much independent frenzy in it;
And all for cellaring what he knows won't keep,
And what he'd best forget—but that he can't.
You'll have it, and have more than I'm foretelling;
And there'll be such a roaring at the Globe 226
As never stunned the bleeding gladiators.
He'll have to change the color of its hair
A bit, for now he calls it Cleopatra.
Black hair would never do for Cleopatra. 230
But you and I are not yet two old women,
And you're a man of office. What he does
Is more to you than how it is he does it,—
And that's what the Lord God has never told him.
They work together, and the Devil helps 'em; 235
They do it of a morning, or if not,
They do it of a night; in which event
He's peevish of a morning. He seems old;
He's not the proper stomach or the sleep—
And they're two sovran agents to conserve him 240
Against the fiery art that has no mercy
But what's in that prodigious grand new House.
I gather something happening in his boyhood
Fulfilled him with a boy's determination

To make all Stratford 'ware of him. Well, well, 245
I hope at last he'll have his joy of it,
And all his pigs and sheep and bellowing beeves,
And frogs and owls and unicorns, moreover,
Be less than hell to his attendant ears.
Oh, past a doubt we'll all go down to see him. 250

He may be wise. With London two days off,
Down there some wind of heaven may yet revive him;
But there's no quickening breath from anywhere
Shall make of him again the poised young faun
From Warwickshire, who'd made, it seems, already 255
A legend of himself before I came
To blink before the last of his first lightning.
Whatever there be, there'll be no more of that;
The coming on of his old monster Time
Has made him a still man; and he has dreams 260
Were fair to think on once, and all found hollow.
He knows how much of what men paint themselves
Would blister in the light of what they are;
He sees how much of what was great now shares
An eminence transformed and ordinary; 265
He knows too much of what the world has hushed
In others, to be loud now for himself;
He knows now at what height low enemies
May reach his heart, and high friends let him fall;
But what not even such as he may know 270
Bedevils him the worst: his lark may sing
At heaven's gate how he will, and for as long
As joy may listen, but *he* sees no gate,
Save one whereat the spent clay waits a little
Before the churchyard has it, and the worm. 275
Not long ago, late in an afternoon,
I came on him unseen down Lambeth way,
And on my life I was afear'd of him:

He gloomed and mumbled like a soul from Tophet,
His hands behind him and his head bent solemn. 280
'What is it now,' said I,—'another woman?'
That made him sorry for me, and he smiled.
'No, Ben,' he mused; 'it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done;
Spiders and flies—we're mostly one or t'other— 285
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done.'
'By God, you sing that song as if you knew it!'
Said I, by way of cheering him; 'what ails ye?'
'I think I must have come down here to think,'
Says he to that, and pulls his little beard; 290
'Your fly will serve as well as anybody,
And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,
And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;
And then your spider gets him in her net,
And eats him out, and hangs him up to dry. 295
That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.
And then your slattern housemaid swings her broom
And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.
It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
It's all a world where bugs and emperors 300
Go singularly back to the same dust,
Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars
That sang together, Ben, will sing the same
Old stave tomorrow.'
When he talks like that,
There's nothing for a human man to do 305
But lead him to some grateful nook like this
Where we be now, and there to make him drink.
He'll drink, for love of me, and then be sick;
A sad sign always in a man of parts,
And always very ominous. The great 310
Should be as large in liquor as in love,—
And our great friend is not so large in either:

One disaffects him, and the other fails him;
Whatso he drinks that has an antic in it,
He's wondering what's to pay in his insides; 315
And while his eyes are on the Cyprian[1]
He's fribbling all the time with that damned House.
We laugh here at his thrift, but after all
It may be thrift that saves him from the devil;
God gave it, anyhow,—and we'll suppose 320
He knew the compound of his handiwork.
Today the clouds are with him, but anon
He'll out of 'em enough to shake the tree
Of life itself and bring down fruit unheard-of,—
And, throwing in the bruised and whole together, 325
Prepare a wine to make us drunk with wonder;
And if he live, there'll be a sunset spell
Thrown over him as over a glassed lake
That yesterday was all a black wild water.

God send he live to give us, if no more, 330
What now's a-rampage in him, and exhibit,
With a decent half-allegiance to the ages
An earnest of at least a casual eye
Turned once on what he owes to Gutenberg,
And to the fealty of more centuries 335
Than are as yet a picture in our vision.
'There's time enough,—I'll do it when I'm old,
And we're immortal men,' he says to that;
And then he says to me, 'Ben, what's "immortal"?
Think you by any force of ordination 340
It may be nothing of a sort more noisy
Than a small oblivion of component ashes
That of a dream-addicted world was once
A moving atomy much like your friend here?'
Nothing will help that man. To make him laugh, 345

[1] Figuratively, love; Venus was particularly honored in Cyprus.

I said then he was a mad mountebank,—
And by the Lord I nearer made him cry.
I could have eat an eft then, on my knees,
Tail, claws, and all of him; for I had stung
The king of men, who had no sting for me, 350
And I had hurt him in his memories;
And I say now, as I shall say again,
I love the man this side idolatry.

He'll do it when he's old, he says. I wonder.
He may not be so ancient as all that. 355
For such as he, the thing that is to do
Will do itself,—but there's a reckoning;
The sessions that are now too much his own,
The roiling inward of a stilled outside,
The churning out of all those blood-fed lines, 360
The nights of many schemes and little sleep,
The full brain hammered hot with too much thinking,
The vexed heart over-worn with too much aching,—
This weary jangling of conjoined affairs
Made out of elements that have no end, 365
And all confused at once, I understand,
Is not what makes a man to live forever.
O no, not now! He'll not be going now:
There'll be time yet for God knows what explosions
Before he goes. He'll stay awhile. Just wait: 370
Just wait a year or two for Cleopatra,
For she's to be a balsam and a comfort;
And that's not all a jape of mine now, either.
For granted once the old way of Apollo
Sings in a man, he may then, if he's able, 375
Strike unafraid whatever strings he will
Upon the last and wildest of new lyres;
Nor out of his new magic, though it hymn
The shrieks of dungeoned hell, shall he create

A madness or a gloom to shut quite out 380
A cleaving daylight, and a last great calm
Triumphant over shipwreck and all storms.
He might have given Aristotle creeps,
But surely would have given him his *katharsis*.[1]
He'll not be going yet. There's too much yet 385
Unsung within the man. But when he goes,
I'd stake ye coin o' the realm his only care
For a phantom world he sounded and found wanting
Will be a portion here, a portion there,
Of this or that thing or some other thing 390
That has a patent and intrinsical
Equivalence in those egregious shillings.
And yet he knows, God help him! Tell me, now,
If ever there was anything let loose
On earth by gods or devils heretofore 395
Like this mad, careful, proud, indifferent Shakespeare!
Where was it, if it ever was? By heaven,
'Twas never yet in Rhodes or Pergamon—
In Thebes or Nineveh, a thing like this!
No thing like this was ever out of England; 400
And that he knows. I wonder if he cares.
Perhaps he does. . . . O Lord, that House in Stratford!
[1915]

[1] purging; a reference to Aristotle's theory of the moral effect of tragedy.

Special Types of Poetry

The following special types belong, as a whole, to neither narrative, lyric, nor dramatic poetry. As poetry has developed it has expanded to meet the demands of an increasingly complex society, and of great changes in the general outlook of men upon life. These changes account for some, and perhaps all, of the special types of poetry that follow.

Satire

Satire exposes faults or vices, whether individual or social. It must have literary form, or it becomes coarse jeering; and it must have humor, or it becomes angry invective.

There are two principal kinds of satire, best represented by the Roman poets Horace and Juvenal. The first is expressed in good-humored ridicule, the satire of politeness against boorishness, of civilization against barbarism. The second is expressed indignantly, the satire of a scornful man denouncing the evils of a scoundrel or of a profligate society.

The spirit of satire is often diffused through many different literary forms, as the drama and the novel. Often, however, especially in the age of classicism which began with Dryden and ended with Johnson (approximately 1660–1780), satire is cultivated for its own sake as a distinct literary type.

Many of the finest satires are to be found in the prose writings of Addison, Arbuthnot, Swift, and Johnson; but

the term is more commonly applied to a type of poetry which reached its most brilliant English expression in Dryden and in Pope. Formal satire was introduced at the end of Elizabeth's reign by imitators of Roman satiric poetry who cultivated an intentional ruggedness of versification. Dryden was the first to raise English satire to the level of poetic beauty. Moreover, he added a portrayal of characters which gives his best passages an appeal that has outlasted the contemporary allusions to men and affairs. Pope is usually regarded as the most finished of English satirists, but some of his finest work is directed for personal revenge against people of no lasting importance. A reader may well prefer the vigor, the humor, and at times the genuine poetic imagination of Dryden's satire to the exquisite cruelty of Pope's. Dryden is at his best in dealing with men and affairs; perhaps Pope is at his best in dealing with trifles about which the reader feels no sympathetic concern.

In the examples which follow, the "Song" represents the earlier satire, "Mac Flecknoe" the satire of literary finish and stately proportions, and "The Hare and Many Friends" the more informal and familiar social satire. "The Battle of Blenheim" expresses the modern attitude toward militarism, and "Etiquette" is a good-natured take-off on the conventional restrictions of modern society.

Song

JOHN DONNE

Go and catch a falling star,
  Get with child a mandrake root,
Tell me where all past years are,
  Or who cleft the Devil's foot;

Satire

Teach me to hear mermaids singing, 5
Or to keep off envy's stinging,
And find
What wind
Serves to advance an honest mind.

If thou be'st born to strange sights, 10
Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights,
Till Age snow white hairs on thee;
Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me
All strange wonders that befell thee, 15
And swear
Nowhere
Lives a woman true and fair.

If thou find'st one, let me know;
Such a pilgrimage were sweet. 20
Yet do not; I would not go,
Though at next door we might meet.
Though she were true when you met her,
And last till you write your letter,
Yet she 25
Will be
False, ere I come, to two or three.
[1633]

From Mac Flecknoe

JOHN DRYDEN

[Thomas Shadwell, a playwright and poet of some note, had offended Dryden. He is here represented as inheriting the dullness of Richard Flecknoe, an insignificant Irish poet who had recently died.]

All human things are subject to decay,
And when Fate summons, monarchs must obey.
This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was called to empire and had governed long;

In prose and verse was owned, without dispute, 5
Through all the realms of Nonsense, absolute.
This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,
And blessed with issue of a large increase;
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the State; 10
And, pond'ring which of all his sons was fit
To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,
Cried, ''Tis resolved! for nature pleads that he
Should only rule who most resembles me.
Shadwell alone my perfect image bears, 15
Mature in dullness from his tender years:
Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretense,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense. 20
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye, 25
And seems designed for thoughtless majesty;
Thoughtless as monarch oaks that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and Shirley[1] were but types of thee,
Thou last great prophet of tautology.' 30

. . . . . .

Here stopped the good old sire and wept for joy, 60
In silent raptures of the hopeful boy.
All arguments, but most his plays, persuade
That for anointed dullness he was made.

. . . . . .

Now Empress Fame had published the renown
Of Shadwell's coronation through the town. 95

[1] Dramatists of the early seventeenth century who had gone out of fashion.

Roused by report of Fame, the nations meet,
From near Bunhill and distant Watling-street.
No Persian carpets spread the imperial way,
But scattered limbs of mangled poets lay;

. . . . . .

Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby[1] there lay,
But loads of Shadwell almost choked the way.
Bilked stationers for yeomen stood prepared,
And Herringman[2] was captain of the guard. 105
The hoary prince in majesty appeared,
High on a throne of his own labors reared.
At his right hand our young Ascanius[3] sate,
Rome's other hope and pillar of the State.
His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace, 110
And lambent dullness played around his face.
As Hannibal did to the altars come,
Sworn by his sire a mortal foe to Rome;
So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,
That he till death true dullness would maintain; 115
And, in his father's right, and realm's defense,
Ne'er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.
The king himself the sacred unction made,
As king by office, and as priest by trade.
In his sinister hand,[4] instead of ball, 120
He placed a mighty mug of potent ale;
'Love's Kingdom'[5] to his right he did convey,
At once his scepter and his rule of sway;
Whose righteous lore the prince had practiced young,
And from whose loins recorded 'Psyche'[6] sprung. 125
His temples, last, with poppies[7] were o'erspread
That nodding seemed to consecrate his head.

[1] A translator and minor poet of the time.
[2] A publisher who had formerly issued Dryden's works.
[3] Son of Æneas and, according to some legends, the founder of Rome.
[4] left hand.
[5] A play by Richard Flecknoe.
[6] An opera by Shadwell.
[7] Symbolic of sleep.

Just at that point of time, if fame not lie,
On his left hand twelve reverend owls did fly.
So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's brook, 130
Presage of sway from twice six vultures took.
The admiring throng loud acclamations make
And omens of his future empire take.
The sire then shook the honors of his head,
And from his brows damps of oblivion shed 135
Full on the filial dullness; long he stood,
Repelling from his breast the raging god;
At length burst out in this prophetic mood:
'Heavens bless my son! from Ireland let him reign
To far Barbadoes on the western main; 140
Of his dominion may no end be known
And greater than his father's be his throne;
Beyond "Love's Kingdom" let him stretch his pen!'
He paused, and all the people cried 'Amen.'
Then thus continued he: 'My son, advance 145
Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
Success let others teach, learn thou from me
Pangs without birth and fruitless industry.
Let "Virtuosos"[1] in five years be writ,
Yet no one thought accuse thy toil of wit. 150
Let gentle George[2] in triumph tread the stage,
Make Dorimant betray, and Lovit rage;
Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the pit,
And in their folly show the writer's wit.
Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defense, 155
And justify their author's want of sense.
Let them be all by thy own model made
Of dullness, and desire no foreign aid,
That they to future ages may be known,
Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own. 160

[1] *The Virtuoso* was a play by Shadwell (1676).

[2] Sir George Etherege, courtier and dramatist, in whose comedies the characters mentioned appear.

Nay, let thy men of wit too be the same,
All full of thee and differing but in name.
But let no alien Sedley[1] interpose
To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.
And when false flowers of rhetoric thou wouldst cull,
Trust nature, do not labor to be dull; 166
But write thy best and top; and in each line
Sir Formal's[2] oratory will be thine.
Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy quill
And does thy northern dedications fill. 170
Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame,
By arrogating Jonson's hostile name;
Let father Flecknoe fire thy mind with praise
And uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.
Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no part: 175
What share have we in nature or in art?

. . . . . .

Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep;
Thy tragic Muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep.
With whate'er gall thou setst thyself to write,
Thy inoffensive satires never bite. 200
In thy felonious heart though venom lies,
It does but touch thy Irish[3] pen, and dies.
Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
In keen Iambics, but mild Anagram.[4]
Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command 205
Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.
There thou mayst wings display and altars raise,
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways;

[1] Sir Charles Sedley, who had written the prologue to Shadwell's play *Epsom Wells*.

[2] A conceited character in *The Virtuoso*.

[3] Dryden uses "Irish" here in reference to Shadwell's supposed relation to Flecknoe. Shadwell bitterly resented this suggestion that he was Irish.

[4] The anagram and the acrostic are frivolous forms of verse, as the iambic is the most important verse form. Dryden refers here to the use of iambics in satire.

Or, if thou wouldst thy different talents suit,
Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.' 210
He said: but his last words were scarcely heard,
For Bruce and Longville[1] had a trap prepared,
And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.
Sinking he left his drugget[2] robe behind,
Borne upwards by a subterranean wind. 215
The mantle fell[3] to the young prophet's part
With double portion of his father's art.
[1682]

The Hare and Many Friends

JOHN GAY

Friendship, like love, is but a name,
Unless to one you stint the flame.
The child whom many fathers share,
Hath seldom known a father's care.
'Tis thus in friendships; who depend 5
On many rarely find a friend.
A Hare, who, in a civil way,
Complied with everything, like Gay,
Was known by all the bestial train,
Who haunt the wood, or graze the plain. 10
Her care was, never to offend,
And every creature was her friend.
As forth she went at early dawn
To taste the dew-besprinkled lawn,
Behind she hears the hunter's cries, 15
And from the deep-mouthed thunder flies.
She starts, she stops, she pants for breath;
She hears the near advance of death;

[1] Characters in *The Virtuoso*, who prepare such a trap for Sir Formal.
[2] A kind of coarse woolen cloth.
[3] An allusion to Elisha's inheritance of the mantle and prophetic powers of Elijah (II Kings, 2).

She doubles, to mislead the hound,
And measures back her mazy round; 20
Till, fainting in the public way,
Half dead with fear she gasping lay.
  What transport in her bosom grew,
When first the Horse appeared in view!
'Let me,' says she, 'your back ascend, 25
And owe my safety to a friend.
You know my feet betray my flight;
To friendship every burden's light.'
The Horse replied: 'Poor honest Puss,[1]
It grieves my heart to see thee thus; 30
Be comforted; relief is near,
For all your friends are in the rear.'
  She next the stately Bull implored,
And thus replied the mighty lord:
'Since every beast alive can tell 35
That I sincerely wish you well,
I may, without offense, pretend
To take the freedom of a friend.
Love calls me hence; a favorite cow
Expects me near yon barley-mow: 40
And when a lady's in the case,
You know, all other things give place.
To leave you thus might seem unkind;
But see, the Goat is just behind.'
  The Goat remarked her pulse was high, 45
Her languid head, her heavy eye:
'My back,' says he, 'may do you harm;
The Sheep's at hand, the wool is warm.'
  The Sheep was feeble, and complained
His sides a load of wool sustained: 50
Said he was slow, confessed his fears;
For hounds eat sheep as well as hares.

[1] The common name for a hare in eighteenth-century literature.

She now the trotting Calf addressed,
To save from death a friend distressed.
'Shall I,' says he, 'of tender age, 55
In this important care engage?
Older and abler passed you by;
How strong are those, how weak am I!
Should I presume to bear you hence,
Those friends of mine may take offense. 60
Excuse me, then. You know my heart.
But dearest friends, alas, must part!
How shall we all lament! Adieu!
For see, the hounds are just in view.'
[1727]

The Battle of Blenheim

ROBERT SOUTHEY

[In 1704 the Allies, under Marlborough and Prince Eugene, defeated the French and Bavarians at Blenheim, on the Danube, in Bavaria. Fifty thousand men were lost.]

It was a summer evening;
Old Kaspar's work was done,
And he before his cottage door
Was sitting in the sun;
And by him sported on the green 5
His little grandchild Wilhelmine.

She saw her brother Peterkin
Roll something large and round,
That he beside the rivulet,
In playing there, had found: 10
He came to ask what he had found,
That was so large and smooth and round.

Old Kaspar took it from the boy,
Who stood expectant by;

And then the old man shook his head, 15
  And with a natural sigh,
'Tis some poor fellow's skull,' said he,
'Who fell in the great victory.

'I find them in the garden,
  For there's many here about; 20
And often, when I go to plow,
  The plowshare turns them out;
For many thousand men,' said he,
'Were slain in that great victory.'

'Now tell us what 'twas all about,' 25
  Young Peterkin he cries;
And little Wilhelmine looks up
  With wonder-waiting eyes;
'Now tell us all about the war,
And what they fought each other for.' 30

'It was the English,' Kaspar cried,
  'Who put the French to rout;
But what they fought each other for
  I could not well make out;
But everybody said,' quoth he, 35
'That 'twas a famous victory.

'My father lived at Blenheim then,
  Yon little stream hard by;
They burned his dwelling to the ground,
  And he was forced to fly; 40
So with his wife and child he fled,
Nor had he where to rest his head.

'With fire and sword the country round
  Was wasted far and wide,
And many a childing mother then, 45
  And new-born baby, died;

But things like that, you know, must be
At every famous victory.

'They say it was a shocking sight
  After the field was won;
For many thousand bodies here
  Lay rotting in the sun:
But things like that, you know, must be
After a famous victory.

'Great praise the Duke of Marlborough won,
  And our good Prince Eugene.'
'Why, 'twas a very wicked thing!'
  Said little Wilhelmine.
'Nay, nay, my little girl,' quoth he;
'It was a famous victory.

'And everybody praised the Duke,
  Who this great fight did win.'
'But what good came of it at last?'
  Quoth little Peterkin.
'Why, that I cannot tell,' said he;
'But 'twas a famous victory.'

[1798]

Etiquette

SIR WILLIAM SCHWENCK GILBERT

The *Ballyshannon* foundered off the coast of Cariboo,
And down in fathoms many went the captain and the crew;
Down went the owners—greedy men whom hope of gain allured:
Oh, dry the starting tear, for they were heavily insured.

Besides the captain and the mate, the owners and the crew,
The passengers were also drowned excepting only two:
Young PETER GRAY, who tasted teas for BAKER, CROOP, AND CO.,
And SOMERS, who from Eastern shores imported indigo.

These passengers, by reason of their clinging to a mast,
Upon a desert island were eventually cast. 10
They hunted for their meals, as ALEXANDER SELKIRK used,
But they couldn't chat together—they had not been introduced.

For PETER GRAY, and SOMERS too, though certainly in trade,
Were properly particular about the friends they made;
And somehow thus they settled it without a word of mouth—
That GRAY should take the northern half, while SOMERS took
the south. 16

On PETER'S portion oysters grew—a delicacy rare,
But oysters were a delicacy PETER couldn't bear.
On SOMERS' side was turtle, on the shingle lying thick, 19
Which SOMERS couldn't eat, because it always made him sick.

GRAY gnashed his teeth with envy as he saw a mighty store
Of turtle unmolested on his fellow-creature's shore:
The oysters at his feet aside impatiently he shoved,
For turtle and his mother were the only things he loved.

And SOMERS sighed in sorrow as he settled in the south, 25
For the thought of PETER'S oysters brought the water to his
mouth.
He longed to lay him down upon the shelly bed, and stuff:
He had often eaten oysters, but had never had enough.

How they wished an introduction to each other they had had
When on board the *Ballyshannon*! And it drove them nearly
mad 30
To think how very friendly with each other they might get,
If it wasn't for the arbitrary rule of etiquette!

One day, when out a-hunting for the *mus ridiculus*,
GRAY overheard his fellow-man soliloquizing thus:
'I wonder how the playmates of my youth are getting on, 35
M'CONNELL, S. B. WALTERS, PADDY BYLES, and ROBINSON?'

These simple words made PETER as delighted as could be,
Old chummies at the Charterhouse[1] were ROBINSON and he!
He walked straight up to SOMERS, then he turned extremely red.
Hesitated, hummed and hawed a bit, then cleared his throat,
and said: 40

'I beg your pardon—pray forgive me if I seem too bold,
But you have breathed a name I knew familiarly of old.
You spoke aloud of ROBINSON—I happened to be by—
You know him?' 'Yes, extremely well.' 'Allow me—so do I!'

It was enough: they felt they could more sociably get on, 45
For (ah, the magic of the fact!) they each knew ROBINSON!
And MR. SOMERS' turtle was at PETER'S service quite,
And MR. SOMERS punished PETER'S oyster-beds all night.

They soon became like brothers from community of wrongs:
They wrote each other little odes and sang each other songs;
They told each other anecdotes disparaging their wives; 51
On several occasions, too, they saved each other's lives.

They felt quite melancholy when they parted for the night,
And got up in the morning soon as ever it was light;
Each other's pleasant company they reckoned so upon, 55
And all because it happened that they both knew ROBINSON!

They lived for many years on that inhospitable shore,
And day by day they learned to love each other more and more.
At last, to their astonishment, on getting up one day,
They saw a vessel anchored in the offing of the bay! 60

To PETER an idea occurred. 'Suppose we cross the main?
So good an opportunity may not be found again.'
And SOMERS thought a minute, then ejaculated, 'Done!
I wonder how my business in the City's getting on?' 64

[1] A famous English school.

'But stay,' said MR. PETER: 'when in England, as you know,
I earned a living tasting teas for BAKER, CROOP, AND CO.,
I may be superseded—my employers think me dead!'
'Then come with me,' said SOMERS, 'and taste indigo instead.'

But all their plans were scattered in a moment when they found
The vessel was a convict ship from Portland, outward bound!
When a boat came off to fetch them, though they felt it very kind,
To go on board they firmly but respectfully declined.

As both the happy settlers roared with laughter at the joke,
They recognized an unattractive fellow pulling stroke:
'Twas ROBINSON—a convict, in an unbecoming frock!
Condemned to seven years for misappropriating stock! ! !

They laughed no more, for SOMERS thought he had been rather rash
In knowing one whose friend had misappropriated cash;
And PETER thought a foolish tack he must have gone upon
In making the acquaintance of a friend of ROBINSON.

At first they didn't quarrel very openly, I've heard;
They nodded when they met, and now and then exchanged a word:
The word grew rare, and rarer still the nodding of the head,
And when they meet each other now, they cut each other dead.

To allocate the island they agreed by word of mouth,
And PETER takes the north again, and SOMERS takes the south;
And PETER has the oysters, which he loathes with horror grim,
And SOMERS has the turtle—turtle disagrees with him.

[1898]

Vers de Société

Vers de société is a term which cannot be successfully translated into English, because any English equivalent would limit its scope. It cannot be called "society verse," because it does not always deal with "high society"; nor can it be called "familiar verse," because much poetry in a familiar style does not belong in this class.

Vers de société is as difficult to define as to translate. Usually, but not always, it deals with sophisticated life; in the words of Professor Schelling, it turns "the conventions of social life into a subject for art." But it is not limited to one kind of subject matter; it is characterized by its manner and mood rather than by its ideas.

The chief characteristics of *vers de société* are brevity, lightness of touch, elegance of style, crispness of verse, moderation of tone, and well-bred humor. Most often it deals in a playful way with love. The writer of *vers de société* must never be dull or even profound, but he may express genuine feeling. A deeply sympathetic poem would be outside the type entirely; but Holmes's tenderly jesting poem "The Last Leaf" is a charming expression of pathos which is not less real for its humor.

'Sigh no more, Ladies'

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From "Much Ado About Nothing"

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,

One foot in sea and one on shore,
  To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so, but let them go, 5
  And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
  Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no moe,
  Of dumps so dull and heavy; 10
The fraud of men was ever so,
  Since summer first was leafy.
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
  And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe 15
  Into Hey nonny, nonny.

[1600]

Cherry-Ripe

THOMAS CAMPION

There is a garden in her face,
  Where roses and white lilies grow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
  Wherein all pleasant fruits doe flow.
    There cherries grow which none may buy 5
    Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves doe cry.

Those cherries fairly doe enclose
  Of orient pearl a double row;
Which when her lovely laughter shows,
  They look like rosebuds filled with snow; 10
    Yet them nor peer nor prince can buy
    Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves doe cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still;
  Her browes like bended bows doe stand,

Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill 15
All that attempt with eye or hand
Those sacred cherries to come nigh,
Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves doe cry.
[*c.* 1616]

Simplex Munditiis[1]

BEN JONSON

From "Epicœne, or The Silent Woman"

Still to be neat, still to be drest
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found, 5
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me, 10
Than all the adulteries of art;
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.
[1616]

'Shall I, Wasting in Despair'

GEORGE WITHER

Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Or make pale my cheeks with care
'Cause another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the day, 5
Or the flowery meads in May,

[1] In simple elegance.

If she think not well of me,
What care I how fair she be?

Shall my seely heart be pined
'Cause I see a woman kind? 10
Or a well-disposed nature
Joined with a lovely feature?
Be she meeker, kinder, than
Turtle-dove or pelican,[1]
If she be not so to me, 15
What care I how kind she be?

Shall a woman's virtues move
Me to perish for her love?
Or her well-deservings known
Make me quite forget my own? 20
Be she with that goodness blest
Which may merit name of best,
If she be not such to me,
What care I how good she be?

'Cause her fortune seems too high, 25
Shall I play the fool and die?
She that bears a noble mind,
If not outward helps she find,
Thinks what with them he would do
That without them dares her woo; 30
And unless that mind I see,
What care I how great she be?

Great, or good, or kind, or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair;
If she love me, this believe, 35
I will die, ere she shall grieve;
If she slight me when I woo,

[1] The pelican, because of its reputed self-sacrifice for its young, was a mediaeval symbol of charity.

I can scorn and let her go;
For if she be not for me,
What care I for whom she be? 40
[1619]

Apelles' Song

AUTHOR UNKNOWN[1]

Cupid and my Campaspe played
At cards for kisses,—Cupid paid.
He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows,
His mother's doves and team of sparrows[2]:
Loses them too; then down he throws 5
The coral of his lip, the rose
Growing on's cheek (but none knows how);
With these the crystal of his brow,
And then the dimple of his chin:
All these did my Campaspe win. 10
At last he set her both his eyes;
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
O Love, has she done this to thee?
What shall, alas! become of me?
[1632]

'Why so Pale and Wan'

SIR JOHN SUCKLING

From "Aglaura"

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prithee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Prithee, why so pale? 5

[1] The poem was formerly ascribed to John Lyly. There is no evidence that he wrote it, and it was first published twenty-six years after his death.

[2] Doves and sparrows are represented as accompanying Venus, or drawing her car.

Vers de Société

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
    Prithee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't win her,
    Saying nothing do 't?
    Prithee, why so mute? 10

Quit, quit, for shame! This will not move:
    This cannot take her.
If of herself she will not love,
    Nothing can make her:
    The devil take her! 15

[1637]

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time

ROBERT HERRICK

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
  Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today,
  Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun, 5
  The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
  And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
  When youth and blood are warmer; 10
But being spent, the worse, and worst
  Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
  And while ye may, go marry;
For, having lost but once your prime, 15
  You may forever tarry.

[1648]

To Electra

ROBERT HERRICK

I dare not ask a kiss,
  I dare not beg a smile,
Lest having that, or this,
  I might grow proud the while.

No, no, the utmost share 5
  Of my desire shall be
Only to kiss that air
  That lately kissed thee.

[1648]

Delight in Disorder

ROBERT HERRICK

A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring lace, which here and there 5
Enthralls the crimson stomacher:
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly:
A winning wave, deserving note,
In the tempestuous petticoat: 10
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me than when art
Is too precise in every part.

[1648]

To a Child of Quality Five Years Old

The Author then Forty

MATTHEW PRIOR

Lords, knights, and 'squires, the numerous band,
  That wear the fair Miss Mary's fetters,
Were summoned by her high command,
  To show their passions by their letters.

My pen among the rest I took, 5
  Lest those bright eyes that cannot read
Should dart their kindling fires, and look
  The power they have to be obeyed.

Nor quality, nor reputation,
  Forbid me yet my flame to tell, 10
Dear Five-years-old befriends my passion,
  And I may write till she can spell.

For, while she makes her silkworms beds
  With all the tender things I swear;
Whilst all the house my passion reads, 15
  In papers round her baby's hair;

She may receive and own my flame,
  For, though the strictest prudes should know it,
She'll pass for a most virtuous dame,
  And I for an unhappy poet. 20

Then too, alas! when she shall tear
  The lines some younger rival sends;
She'll give me leave to write, I fear,
  And we shall still continue friends.

For, as our different ages move, 25
  'Tis so ordained (would Fate but mend it!)

That I shall be past making love,
When she begins to comprehend it.

[1704]

The Last Leaf

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

[The original of this portrait was Major Thomas Melville, a veteran of the Revolutionary War and a member of the Boston Tea Party, "the last of the cocked hats" in Boston.]

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground 5
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found 10
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan, 15
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
'They are gone.'

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest 20
In their bloom,
And the names he loved to hear

Have been carved for many a year
  On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said— 25
Poor old lady, she is dead
  Long ago—
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
  In the snow; 30

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
  Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack 35
  In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
  At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat, 40
And the breeches, and all that,
  Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
  In the spring, 45
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
  Where I cling.

[1831]

Rondeau[1]

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT

[The Jenny of the poem is said to have been Jane Welsh Carlyle, who was greatly overjoyed at the news brought in by Hunt, their near neighbor, of the success of one of her husband's works.]

Jenny kissed me when we met,
    Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
    Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad, 5
    Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
    Jenny kissed me.

[1838]

I'm Not a Single Man

Lines Written in a Young Lady's Album

THOMAS HOOD

A pretty task, Miss S——, to ask
  A Benedictine[2] pen,
That cannot quite at freedom write
  Like those of other men.
No lover's plaint my Muse must paint 5
  To fill this page's span,
But be correct and recollect
  I'm not a single man.

Pray only think, for pen and ink
  How hard to get along, 10
That may not turn on words that burn
  Or Love, the life of song!

[1] This poem is not a true rondeau. See page 240.

[2] From Benedick, in Shakespeare's "Much Ado about Nothing," who married after having ridiculed love.

Nine Muses, if I chooses, I
  May woo all in a clan;
But one Miss S—— I daren't address— 15
  I'm not a single man.

Scribblers unwed, with little head,
  May eke it out with heart,
And in their lays it often plays
  A rare first-fiddle part. 20
They make a kiss to rime with bliss,
  But if *I* so began,
I have my fears about my ears—
  I'm not a single man.

Upon your cheek I may not speak, 25
  Nor on your lip be warm,
I must be wise about your eyes
  And formal with your form;
Of all that sort of thing, in short,
  On T. H. Bayly's[1] plan, 30
I must not twine a single line—
  I'm not a single man.

A watchman's part compels my heart
  To keep you off its *beat*,
And I might dare as soon to swear 35
  At *you*, as at your feet.
I can't expire in passion's fire
  As other poets can—
My life (she's by) won't let me die—
  I'm not a single man. 40

Shut out from love, denied a dove,
  Forbidden bow and dart;
Without a groan to call my own,
  With neither hand nor heart;

[1] Bayly, a popular English song writer (1797–1839)

To Hymen vowed, and not allowed 45
  To flirt e'en with your fan,
Here end, as just a friend, I must—
  I'm not a single man.

[*c.* 1845]

Sorrows of Werther

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

[The verses are a satire upon a novel by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), a product of German romanticism. To understand the humor of the poem, one should read the last few pages of the novel.]

Werther had a love for Charlotte
  Such as words could never utter;
Would you know how first he met her?
  She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady, 5
  And a moral man was Werther,
And, for all the wealth of Indies,
  Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sighed and pined and ogled,
  And his passion boiled and bubbled, 10
Till he blew his silly brains out,
  And no more was by it troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body
  Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person, 15
  Went on cutting bread and butter.

[1855]

The Pastoral

Pastoral poetry arose with Theocritus, a Greek poet of the third century B.C. He spent his boyhood in Sicily; and later, from the sophisticated society of the great city of Alexandria, he looked back in his poems to the scenes of his boyhood. These short poems, called "idyls," were lyrical, descriptive, narrative, or dramatic in type.

To the Roman poet Virgil the pastoral was already conventionalized. Though his eclogues (dialogues between shepherds) show a genuine love for the country, the phrasing, the characters, and the situations were neither wholly Roman nor wholly Greek. Later, the names of the characters became conventionalized, and pastoral poetry tended to become allegorical, satirical, or fantastic, rather than realistic and simple.

Through Italian influences, the pastoral came into English poetry in the sixteenth century. Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar* represents the tendency toward the use of real English country scenes and characters, as Sidney's prose romance *Arcadia*, with its frequent interspersed songs, popularized the artificial, idealized, or Arcadian presentation of rustic life.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century there was an effort to make a distinct class of poetry on the model of Theocritus and the eclogues of Virgil. This reached its final development in Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725), and its final condemnation in the denunciation of Johnson and the ridicule of Goldsmith.

Pastoral elegies, pastoral dramas, and pastoral romances also have been written in which something of the manner or spirit of the idyl or the eclogue has colored other literary types.

During the last two centuries the pastoral convention has seemed too artificial for serious poetic use, and the pastoral has ceased to be regarded as a distinct poetic form. The nobles and ladies of the court of Louis XVI could still play at simple life, with straw bonnets and shepherds' crooks, in their artificial village near Versailles; but the French Revolution ended that for them as for us. Modern interest in the life of peasants is far more real, and it has found expression in the less artificial poetry of Burns and Wordsworth, of Whittier and Frost.

In the selections which follow, Marlowe's poem represents the Arcadian or artificially simple lyric at its highest level of artistic beauty. The passage from Gay's *The Shepherd's Week* shows a deliberate return to the realism of Theocritus, together with a constant strain of satire on the Arcadian view of rustic life.

The Passionate Shepherd to his Love

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove,
That valleys, groves, hills and fields,
Woods or steepy mountains yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks, 5
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies, 10
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair-lined slippers for the cold, 15
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy-buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
An if these pictures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love. 20

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

Thursday, or The Spell

JOHN GAY

From "The Shepherd's Week"

[This was part of a satire written by Gay to expose the hackneyed methods of some of the pastoral writers of his time, especially Philips. In doing this Gay took real country men and women for his characters, in order to ridicule the over-conventionalized pastoral. What Gay intended as a satire hence comes near to being a realistic picture of English country manners—a real pastoral.]

Hobnelia, seated in a dreary vale,
In pensive mood rehearsed her piteous tale,
Her piteous tale the winds in sighs bemoan,
And pining Echo answers groan for groan.

I rue the day, a rueful day, I trow, 5
The woeful day, a day indeed of woe!
When Lubberkin to town his cattle drove,

A maiden fine bedight[1] he hapt to love;
The maiden fine bedight his love retains,
And for the village he forsakes the plains. 10
Return, my Lubberkin, these ditties hear;
Spells will I try, and spells shall ease my care.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

When first the year, I heard the cuckow sing, 15
And call with welcome note the budding spring,
I straightway set a running with such haste,
Deb'rah that won the smock[2] scarce ran so fast.
Till spent for lack of breath, quite weary grown,
Upon a rising bank I sat adown, 20
Then doffed my shoe, and by my troth, I swear,
Therein I spied this yellow frizzled hair,
As like to Lubberkin's in curl and hue,
As if upon his comely pate it grew.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around. 26

At eve last Midsummer no sleep I sought,
But to the field a bag of hemp-seed brought.
I scattered round the seed on ev'ry side,
And three times in a trembling accent cried, 30
This hempseed with my virgin hand I sow;
Who shall my true-love be, the crop shall mow.
I straight looked back, and if my eyes speak truth,
With his keen scythe behind me came the youth.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around. 36

Last Valentine, the day when birds of kind
Their paramours with mutual chirpings find,
I rearly[3] rose, just at the break of day,

[1] clothed. [2] A loose garment; formerly given as a prize for races among women at county fairs. [3] early.

Before the sun had chased the stars away; 40
A-field I went, amid the morning dew,
To milk my kine (for so should huswives do);
Thee first I spied, and the first swain we see,
In spite of fortune shall our true-love be;
See, Lubberkin, each bird his partner take, 45
And canst thou then thy sweetheart dear forsake?
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

Last May-day fair I searched to find a snail
That might my secret lover's name reveal; 50
Upon a gooseberry bush a snail I found,
For always snails near sweetest fruit abound.
I seized the vermin, home I quickly sped,
And on the hearth the milk-white embers spread:
Slow crawled the snail, and if I right can spell, 55
In the soft ashes marked a curious L:
Oh, may this wondrous omen lucky prove!
For L is found in Lubberkin and Love.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around. 60

Two hazel-nuts I threw into the flame,
And to each nut I gave a sweetheart's name.
This with the loudest bounce me sore amazed,
That in a flame of brightest color blazed.
As blazed the nut so may thy passion grow, 65
For 'twas thy nut that did so brightly glow.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

As peascods once I plucked, I chanced to see
One that was closely filled with three times three, 70
Which when I cropped I safely home conveyed,
And o'er my door the spell in secret laid.

My wheel I turned, and sung a ballad new,
While from the spindle I the fleeces drew;
The latch moved up, when who should first come in,
But in his proper[1] person,—Lubberkin! 76
I broke my yarn, surprised the sight to see,
Sure sign that he would break his word with me.
Eftsoons[2] I joined it with my wonted sleight:
So may again his love with mine unite! 80
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground.
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

This lady-fly I take from off the grass,
Whose spotted back might scarlet red surpass:
Fly, Lady-Bird, North, South, or East, or West! 85
Fly where the man is found that I love best.
He leaves my hand: see, to the West he's flown,
To call my true-love from the faithless town.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around. 90

This mellow pippin which I pare around,
My shepherd's name shall flourish on the ground:
I fling th' unbroken paring o'er my head—
Upon the grass a perfect L is read,
Yet on my heart a fairer L is seen 95
Than what the paring makes upon the green.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

This pippin shall another trial make,
See, from the core two kernels brown I take 100
This on my cheek for Lubberkin is worn,
And Boobyclod on t'other side is borne;
But Boobyclod soon drops upon the ground,
A certain token that his love's unsound,

[1] own. [2] at once.

While Lubberkin sticks firmly to the last; 105
Oh were his lips to mine but joined so fast!
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

As Lubberkin once slept beneath a tree,
I twitched his dangling garter from his knee; 110
He wist not when the hempen string I drew.
Now mine I quickly doff of inkle[1] blue;
Together fast I tie the garters twain,
And while I knit the knot repeat this strain:
Three times a true-love's knot I tie secure; 115
Firm be the knot, firm may his love endure!
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

As I was wont, I trudged last market-day
To town, with new-laid eggs preserved in hay. 120
I made my market[2] long before 'twas night;
My purse grew heavy and my basket light.
Straight to the pothecary's shop I went,
And in love-powder all my money spent;
Behap what will, next Sunday after prayers, 125
When to the ale-house Lubberkin repairs,
These golden flies into his mug I'll throw,
And soon the swain with fervent love shall glow.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around. 130

But hold! our Lightfoot barks, and cocks his ears:
O'er yonder stile see, Lubberkin appears!
He comes, he comes! Hobnelia's not bewrayed,
Nor shall she, crowned with willow, die a maid.
He vows, he swears, he'll give me a green gown: 135
Oh dear! I fall adown, adown, adown!
[1714]

[1] A kind of tape. [2] sold my wares.

The Elegy

An elegy is a lament for the loved or illustrious dead. It is longer than a dirge or funeral song; but such a long poem as *In Memoriam* is properly a series of lyrics rather than a single elegy. It may express intense feeling, but it is largely reflective and sometimes entirely impersonal. It is usually elevated in style and formal in construction, and it frequently follows the special form of the pastoral elegy, in which the central character is represented as a dead shepherd lamented by his surviving comrades.

In a formal elegy there are usually three stages of the thought: (1) the poet states the cause of his grief, and recalls the old days of happiness; (2) he passes on to a questioning of the justice of fate, and to the human problem of life and death; (3) he takes consolation in philosophy or in religion, in hope for the future or in a glorified remembrance of the loved one.

The most famous formal elegies of grief in English are Milton's "Lycidas," Shelley's "Adonais," and Arnold's "Thyrsis." Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" is the finest elegy in literature, but it belongs to a different class, in which personal grief is replaced by a deep sympathy for the pathetic inadequacy of human life. If Gray had written a formal poem on the death of his mother, it would have been a true elegy; but his grief for her found expression in the simple and exquisite epitaph which he inscribed on her tombstone in the famous country churchyard of his poem:

In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow, the careful tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her.

In Greek and Latin poetry the term "elegy" was applied to various kinds of poetry in a certain meter, usually poems on war or love. In English the term is commonly restricted to laments for the dead, but it is sometimes loosely applied to a class of love poems or to certain types of reflective or meditative verse, such as the elegies of John Donne.

Lycidas

JOHN MILTON

[This pastoral elegy was Milton's contribution to a memorial volume issued in 1637 by friends of Edward King, who had been drowned in the Irish Sea. Milton refers particularly to King as a former Cambridge classmate, a poet, and a promising young clergyman. They were not intimate friends; hence the poem is less an expression of grief than a lament for the untimely loss of a man at the beginning of his career. It also expresses Milton's views on Church government.]

Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more,
Ye Myrtles brown, with ivy[1] never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. 5
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew 10
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rime.
He must not float upon his watery bier

[1] Laurel, myrtle, and ivy were used to make crowns of honor for poets or contestants for prizes.

Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
  Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well[1] 15
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favor *my* destined urn, 20
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!
  For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;
Together both, ere the high lawns[2] appeared 25
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly[3] winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening, bright, 30
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute;
Tempered to the oaten flute
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long; 35
And old Damœtas[4] loved to hear our song.
  But, oh, the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, 40
And all their echoes, mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

[1] The Pierian spring at the foot of Mount Olympus, sacred to the Muses.
[2] Open glades in woodland.
[3] Perhaps the trumpet fly, whose note is heard at midday.
[4] Probably some teacher of both King and Milton at Cambridge.

As killing as the canker[1] to the rose, 45
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.
  Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep 50
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona[2] high,
Nor yet where Deva[3] spreads her wizard stream. 55
Ay me! I fondly dream
'Had ye been there'—for what could that have done?
What could the Muse[4] herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament, 60
When, by the rout[5] that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
  Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade, 65
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?[6]
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,

[1] cankerworm.
[2] The Roman name for Anglesey, an island north of Wales.
[3] The river Dee; like Mona a seat of Druidical worship.
[4] Calliope.
[5] Orpheus was torn in pieces by the women of Thrace.
[6] To lead a life of pleasure; perhaps to write fashionable love poetry as the Cavalier poets were doing.

Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,[1] 75
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'
Phœbus[2] replied, and touched my trembling ears:
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies, 80
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'
O fountain Arethuse, and thou honored flood, 85
Smooth-sliding Mincius,[3] crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea.[4]
That came in Neptune's plea. 90
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beaked promontory.
They knew not of his story; 95
And sage Hippotades[5] their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope[6] with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

[1] Atropos, the Fate who cut the thread of human life, seems to Milton a Fury.

[2] Apollo, patron of poetry and music.

[3] An allusion to Theocritus and Virgil, Greek and Roman writers of pastoral poetry; Theocritus was born in Sicily, where rose the fountain Arethusa, and Virgil near the Mincius, in Mantua.

[4] Triton, trumpeter or attendant of Neptune, in whose sea domain King perished.

[5] Æolus, son of Hippotes, was the god of the winds.

[6] A sea nymph.

Next, Camus,[1] reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.[2]
'Ah! who hath reft,' quoth he, 'my dearest pledge?'
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:—
'How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,[3]
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold! 115
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook,[4] or have learnt aught else the least 120
That to the faithful Herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim Wolf[5] with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine[6] at the door 130
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.'

[1] The river Cam, upon which Cambridge lies, standing here for the University as St. Peter stands for the Church.
[2] The hyacinth.
[3] Mercenary clergymen.
[4] The symbol of the shepherd, or pastor.
[5] The Roman Catholic Church, represented here as the foe of the sheep.
[6] A difficult passage; perhaps, literally, an axe, and figuratively the Houses of Parliament.

Return, Alpheus[1]; the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowrets of a thousand hues. 135
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star[2] sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enameled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers, 140
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe[3] primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet, 145
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears, 150
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled; 155
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world[4];
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus[5] old, 160
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.[6]

1 A classical river, lover of Arethusa; here, the Sicilian Muse of pastoral poetry.
2 Sirius, the Dog Star, brightest at the time of greatest heat.
3 early. 4 the world of monsters.
5 Land's End, in Cornwall, the fabled home of Bellerus.
6 The places mentioned are on the Spanish coast.

Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
  Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more, 165
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore 170
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves, 175
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move, 180
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the Shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood. 185

  Thus sang the uncouth[1] Swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still Morn went out with sandals gray:
He touched the tender stops of various quills,[2]
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:[3]
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills, 190
And now was dropt into the western bay.
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.
[1638]

[1] unknown; Milton was not famous in 1637.
[2] reeds.
[3] Greek pastorals were written in the Doric dialect.

Elegy written in a Country Churchyard

THOMAS GRAY

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
  The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
  And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, 5
  And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
  And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
  The moping owl does to the moon complain 10
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bower,
  Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
  Where heaves the turf in many a mold'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, 15
  The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
  The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
  No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
  Or busy housewife ply her evening care;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
  Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield, 25
  Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
  How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
  Their homely joys, and destiny obscure; 30
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
  The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
  And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits[1] alike th' inevitable hour. 35
  The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,
  If Mem'ry o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
  The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40

Can storied urn or animated bust
  Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provoke[2] the silent dust,
  Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid 45
  Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
  Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
  Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll; 50
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
  And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
  The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, 55
  And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

[1] The subject is "hour." [2] call forth.

Some village-Hampden,[1] that with dauntless breast
  The little Tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
  Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. 60

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
  The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
  And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone 65
  Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
  And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
  To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, 70
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
  With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
  Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life 75
  They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
  Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rimes and shapeless sculpture decked,
  Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered muse,
  The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
  That teach the rustic moralist to die.

[1] John Hampden resisted the collection of ship-money by Charles I.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey, 85
  This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
  Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
  Some pious drops the closing eye requires; 90
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
  Ev'n in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonored Dead
  Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led, 95
  Some kindred Spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,
  'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
  To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. 100

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
  That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
  And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn, 105
  Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
  Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

'One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
  Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree; 110
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
  Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

'The next with dirges due in sad array
  Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.

Approach and read (for thou can'st read) the lay, 115
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own. 120

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send;
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heav'n ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose, 125
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.
[1751]

From Adonais

An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, Etc.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulcher,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy; 'tis naught
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not 5
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise, 10
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead 15
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,[1]
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

And gray walls molder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand; 20
And one keen pyramid[2] with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band 25
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set, 30
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb. 35
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity, 40

[1] The Protestant cemetery at Rome.
[2] The Pyramid of Cestius, the tomb of its builder, Caius Cestius Epulo, overlooking the Protestant cemetery.

Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak. 45

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before; from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear 50
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near;
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe, 55
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea, 60
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven 65
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven, 70
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

[1821]

The Elegy

From In Memoriam

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

[*In Memoriam* is a series of lyric poems, composed during many years, upon the death of Arthur Hallam, Tennyson's dearest friend, and recording Tennyson's spiritual experiences developing from this event. Hallam died in 1833, and the greater part of the poems forming *In Memoriam* were published in 1850. The whole series as arranged is fairly chronological, beginning with expressions of grief such as follow one's first consciousness of the real fact of death.]

I

I held it truth, with him who sings[1]
  To one clear harp in divers tones,
  That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years 5
  And find in loss a gain to match?
  Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
  Let darkness keep her raven gloss. 10
  Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
  The long result of love, and boast,
  'Behold the man that loved and lost, 15
But all he was is overworn.'

II

Old yew, which graspest at the stones
  That name the underlying dead,
  Thy fibers net the dreamless head,
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones. 20

[1] Goethe.

The seasons bring the flower again, 5
  And bring the firstling to the flock;
  And in the dusk of thee the clock
Beats out the little lives of men.

O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,
  Who changest not in any gale, 10
  Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom;

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
  Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
  I seem to fail from out my blood 15
And grow incorporate into thee.

XXI

I sing to him that rests below,
  And, since the grasses round me wave,
  I take the grasses of the grave,
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveler hears me now and then, 5
  And sometimes harshly will he speak:
  'This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men.'

Another answers, 'Let him be,
  He loves to make parade of pain, 10
  That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth: 'Is this an hour
  For private sorrow's barren song,
  When more and more the people throng 15
The chairs and thrones of civil power?[1]

[1] Tennyson, as a conservative, opposed the increasing extension of political rights to the masses.

'A time to sicken and to swoon,
  When Science reaches forth her arms
  To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon[1]?' 20

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
  Ye never knew the sacred dust:
  I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay, 25
  For now her little ones have ranged;
  And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stolen away.

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
  The captive void of noble rage,
  The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods;

I envy not the beast that takes 5
  His license in the field of time,
  Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
  The heart that never plighted troth 10
  But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
  I feel it, when I sorrow most;
  'Tis better to have loved and lost 15
Than never to have loved at all.

[1] A reference to astronomical discoveries of hitherto unknown satellites of the planets.

LVII

Peace; come away: the song of woe
  Is after all an earthly song:
  Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale; 5
  But half my life I leave behind:
  Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
But I shall pass; my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
  One set slow bell will seem to toll 10
  The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
  Eternal greetings to the dead;
  And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said, 15
'Adieu, adieu,' for evermore.

[1850]

Death Carol

WALT WHITMAN

From "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"

Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death.

Praised be the fathomless universe, 5
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious;
And for love, sweet love—But praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death.

The Elegy

Dark Mother, always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome? 10
Then I chant it for thee—I glorify thee above all;
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

Approach, strong Deliveress!
When it is so—when thou hast taken them, I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee, 15
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose, saluting thee—adornments and feastings for thee;
And the sights of the open landscape, and the high-spread sky, are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night. 20

The night, in silence, under many a star;
The ocean shore, and the husky whispering wave, whose voice I know;
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veiled Death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song! 25
Over the rising and sinking waves—over the myriad fields and the prairies wide;
Over the dense-packed cities all, and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death!

[1865–1866]

Descriptive Poetry, chiefly Lyrical

Descriptive poetry has for its aim an appeal to the emotions of its readers by (1) the picturing force of words and (2) the tone-color. Its purpose is not to portray objects or scenes, but to convey the emotions which they arouse.

Nearly all poetry makes use of imagery and prefers concrete words to abstractions, but descriptive poetry presents a total impression of landscape or portrait. It depicts the time of day or night; the season of the year; the conditions of weather or wind or tide; the straw-thatched cottage or the city tenement; human faces and dress, gestures and movement and speech.

The finest descriptive poetry is not that which gives the most precise account of the facts, but that which appeals most strongly to the reader's imagination. A report of the Weather Bureau may tell the temperature and the direction of the wind, the cloudiness or the amount of precipitation; but a poem represents the scene as realized by human feeling and experience:

> When icicles hang by the wall
> And Dick the shepherd blows his nail
> And Tom bears logs into the hall
> And milk comes frozen home in pail. . .

Descriptive poetry appeals particularly to emotional associations—to recollections of childhood or of bygone happiness. Such an appeal can easily become commonplace and sentimental, as in "The Old Oaken Bucket."

On the other hand, the stark naturalism of much contemporary poetry is sometimes unable to arouse any emotional response in the reader.

Most poetry contains descriptive phrases or passages, usually as a subordinate feature. In the poems included in the group which follows, the picture is stressed as the principal source of appeal. The reader's emotions are aroused principally by the atmospheric background which is built up in each poem. This effect is not dependent entirely upon the meaning and the associations of the words, but it is greatly aided by their tone-color, or sound. In "The Lotos-Eaters," for instance, the mood of languor is heightened by every line of the verse and by the sound of almost every word in the poem.

The length, the details, and the degree of emotional intensity in a descriptive poem determine whether it leans toward the pictorial landscape poetry of the eighteenth century (largely modeled after Milton's "L'Allegro") or toward the subjective nature lyric of the nineteenth century (largely an outgrowth of the poetry of Wordsworth).

Song: 'When Icicles Hang'

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From "Love's Labor's Lost"

When icicles hang by the wall
  And Dick the shepherd blows his nail
And Tom bears logs into the hall
  And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd and ways[1] be foul, 5
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
    'Tu-whit, tu-who!'—

[1] roads.

A merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel[1] the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow 10
And coughing drowns the parson's saw[2]
And birds sit brooding in the snow
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl, 15
'Tu-whit, tu-who!'—
A merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.
[1598]

L'Allegro

JOHN MILTON

Hence, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus[3] and blackest Midnight born
In Stygian[4] cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes and shrieks and sights unholy!
Find out some uncouth[5] cell, 5
Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert[6] ever dwell. 10
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,[7]
And by men heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,

[1] stir for cooling; or perhaps skim.
[2] moral saying.
[3] The mythical three-headed dog guarding the way to the lower world.
[4] Pertaining to the Styx, the river encircling the infernal regions.
[5] unknown.
[6] To the Greeks a distant region of darkness, mist, and cold.
[7] One of the three Graces, whose realm included the social diversions.

With two sister Graces more, 15
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying, 20
There on beds of violets blue
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee 25
Jest, and youthful Jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's[1] cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek; 30
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee 35
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free: 40
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come in spite of sorrow, 45
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-brier or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;

[1] The goddess of youth.

While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin, 50
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill, 55
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great sun begins his state, 60
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the plowman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe, 65
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale[1]
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
  Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the landskip round it measures: 70
Russet lawns and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied, 75
Shallow brooks and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighboring eyes. 80
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,

[1] counts his sheep.

Where Corydon and Thyrsis[1] met
Are at their savory dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes, 85
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead. 90
  Sometimes, with secure delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks[2] sound
To many a youth and many a maid 95
Dancing in the checkered shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale, 100
With stories told of many a feat,
How fairy Mab[3] the junkets eat:
She[4] was pinched and pulled, she said;
And he,[5] by friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin[6] sweat 105
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-laborers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend, 110
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.

[1] Conventional names for shepherds, like the two that follow.
[2] The rebec was a medieval stringed instrument played with a bow.
[3] The queen of the fairies.
[4] The narrator.
[5] Another narrator.
[6] Robin Goodfellow.

Thus done the tales, to bed they creep, 115
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
  Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds[1] of peace, high triumphs hold, 120
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence,[2] and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear 125
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream. 130
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock[3] be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares, 135
Lap me in soft Lydian[4] airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout[5]
Of linked sweetness long drawn out, 140
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;

[1] garments.
[2] In astrology, the stars cast their influence on men.
[3] The low shoe used by Greek comic actors, signifying comedy.
[4] Of the three modes of music most common among the Greeks, the Lydian was the most tender.
[5] turn.

That Orpheus' self[1] may heave his head 145
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice. 150
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.
[1645]

Corinna's Going a-Maying

ROBERT HERRICK

Get up, get up for shame, the blooming morn
Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.[2]
See how Aurora throws her fair
Fresh-quilted colors through the air:
Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see 5
The dew bespangling herb and tree.
Each flower has wept and bow'd toward the east
Above an hour since: yet you not dress'd;
Nay! not so much as out of bed?
When all the birds have matins said 10
And sung their thankful hymns, 'tis sin,
Nay, profanation, to keep in,
Whereas a thousand virgins on this day
Spring, sooner than the lark, to fetch in May.

Rise and put on your foliage, and be seen 15
To come forth, like the spring time, fresh and green,
And sweet as Flora. Take no care
For jewels for your gown or hair:
Fear not; the leaves will strew
Gems in abundance upon you: 20

[1] See the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in a reference work.
[2] The sun's beams are the hair of the sun god.

Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,
Against you come, some orient pearls unwept;
Come and receive them while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night:
And Titan[1] on the eastern hill 25
Retires himself, or else stands still
Till you come forth. Wash, dress, be brief in praying:
Few beads are best when once we go a-Maying.

Come, my Corinna, come; and, coming, mark
How each field turns a street, each street a park 30
Made green and trimm'd with trees; see how
Devotion gives each house a bough
Or branch: each porch, each door ere this
An ark, a tabernacle is,
Made up of whitethorn, neatly interwove; 35
As if here were those cooler shades of love.
Can such delights be in the street
And open fields and we not see't?
Come, we'll abroad; and let's obey
The proclamation made for May: 40
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying;
But, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

There's not a budding boy or girl this day
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
A deal of youth, ere this, is come 45
Back, and with whitethorn laden home.
Some have dispatched their cakes and cream
Before that we have left to dream:
And some have wept, and woo'd, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth: 50
Many a green-gown has been given;
Many a kiss, both odd and even:

[1] the sun.

Many a glance too has been sent
From out the eye, love's firmament;
Many a jest told of the keys betraying 55
This night, and locks pick'd, yet we're not a-Maying.

Come, let us go while we are in our prime;
And take the harmless folly of the time.
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty. 60
Our life is short, and our days run
As fast away as does the sun;
And, as a vapor or a drop of rain,
Once lost, can ne'er be found again,
So when or you or I are made 65
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drowned with us in endless night.
Then while time serves, and we are but decaying,
Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying. 70
[1648]

The Wild Honeysuckle

PHILIP FRENEAU

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet:
No roving foot shall crush thee here, 5
No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white arrayed,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by; 10
Thus quietly thy summer goes,
Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms, that must decay,
  I grieve to see your future doom;
They died—nor were those flowers more gay, 15
  The flowers that did in Eden bloom;
    Unpitying frosts and Autumn's power
    Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews
  At first thy little being came: 20
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
  For when you die you are the same;
    The space between is but an hour,
    The frail duration of a flower.

[1786]

Kubla Khan: or, A Vision in a Dream

A Fragment

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

[As the title indicates, the poem was the product of a dream in which the vision of the scene described below seemed to the author to assume the clearness of actual waking sight. Immediately upon waking Coleridge began putting the scene into verse; but he was interrupted in the midst and never could recollect the remainder.]

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
    Down to a sunless sea. 5
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills, 10
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted 15
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst 20
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion 25
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war! 30

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device, 35
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played, 40
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me
That with music loud and long, 45

I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair! 50
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

[1797; printed 1816]

The Solitary Reaper

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain, 5
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands 10
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In springtime from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas 15
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago: 20

Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang 25
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill, 30
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

[1807]

'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud'

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, 5
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay: 10
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay, 15
In such a jocund company:

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood, 20
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.
[1807]

To Autumn

JOHN KEATS

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees, 5
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease, 10
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind; 15
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook; 20
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Aye, where are they?
  Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day, 25
  And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
  Among the river sallows, borne aloft
    Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn; 30
  Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
  The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
    And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

[1820]

To Night

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
    Spirit of Night!
Out of thy misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear, 5
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
    Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
    Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day; 10
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
    Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn, 15
    I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,

And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest, 20
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee, 25
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—and I replied,
No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon; 30
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night,—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon! 35

[1824]

To Helen

EDGAR ALLAN POE

[The Helen of the poem was Mrs. Helen Stannard, of Richmond, Virginia, the mother of one of Poe's boyhood friends. The lines give the feeling, however, that Poe had also in mind Helen of Troy.]

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicæan[1] barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore. 5

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs, have brought me home

[1] This doubtful allusion is variously interpreted.

To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome. 10

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche,[1] from the regions which
Are Holy Land! 15
[1831]

The Lotos-Eaters

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

[Tennyson's poem is founded on the following passage from the Odyssey (ix, 82 ff.), here given entire from the prose translation by Butcher and Lang.

"Thence for nine whole days was I borne by ruinous winds over the teeming deep; but on the tenth day we set foot on the land of the lotus-eaters, who eat a flowery food. So we stepped ashore and drew water, and straightway my company took their midday meal by the swift ships. Now when we had tasted meat and drink I sent forth certain of my company to go and make search what manner of men they were who here live upon the earth by bread, and I chose out two of my fellows, and sent a third with them as herald. Then straightway they went and mixed with the men of the lotus-eaters, and so it was that the lotus-eaters devised not death for our fellows, but gave them of the lotus to taste. Now whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotus-eating men, ever feeding on the lotus, and forgetful of his homeward way. Therefore I led them back to the ships weeping, and sore against their will, and dragged them beneath the benches, and bound them in the hollow barques. But I commanded the rest of my well-loved company to make speed and go on board the swift ships, lest haply any should eat of the lotus and be forgetful of returning. Right soon they embarked and sat upon the benches, and sitting orderly they smote the gray sea water with their oars."]

'Courage!' he said, and pointed toward the land,
'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.

[1] spirit (Greek).

All round the coast the languid air did swoon, 5
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke, 10
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; far off, three mountain-tops, 15
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed; and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset lingered low adown
In the red West; thro' mountain clefts the dale 20
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale, 25
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them 30
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake, 35
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore 40
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then someone said, 'We will return no more';
And all at once they sang, 'Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.' 45

Choric Song

I

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies, 50
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep, 55
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone, 60
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings, 65
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;

Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
'There is no joy but calm!'—
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood, 70
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow 75
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days 80
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea. 85
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labor be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last? 90
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave? 95
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall, and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem 100
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day, 105
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory, 110
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives 115
And their warm tears; but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold 120
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain. 125
The Gods are hard to reconcile;
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath, 130

Sore Tasks to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth[1] and moly,[2]
How sweet—while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly—
With half-dropt eyelid still, 135
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine— 140
To watch the emerald-colored water falling
Thro' many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak, 145
The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone;
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we, 150
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind. 155
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,

[1] A flower supposed to be unfading. [2] A plant of magical properties.

Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands, 160
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centered in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil, 165
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian[1] valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.[2] 170
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.
[1832, 1842]

Meeting at Night

ROBERT BROWNING

I

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow, 5
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match, 10

[1] Pertaining to Elysium, the Greek paradise. [2] narcissus.

And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!
[1845]

Parting at Morning

ROBERT BROWNING

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.
[1845]

Home-Thoughts, from Abroad

ROBERT BROWNING

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf 5
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows! 10
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture 15
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew

The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower! 20
[1845]

Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

WALT WHITMAN

I

Flood-tide below me! I watch you face to face;
Clouds of the west! sun there half an hour high! I see you also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes! how curious you are to me!
On the ferry-boats, the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose;
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence, are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose. 5

II

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things, at all hours of the day;
The simple, compact, well-joined scheme—myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated, yet part of the scheme;
The similitudes of the past, and those of the future;
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings—on the walk in the street, and the passage over the river;
The current rushing so swiftly, and swimming with me far away; 10
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them;
The certainty of others—the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry, and cross from shore to shore;
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide;

Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east; 15
Others will see the islands large and small;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high;
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring in of the flood-tide, the falling back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

III

It avails not, neither time or place—distance avails not; 20
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence;
I project myself—also I return—I am with you, and I know how it is.
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt;
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd;
Just as you are refreshed by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refreshed; 25
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood, yet was hurried;
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships, and the thick-stemmed pipes of steamboats, I looked.

I, too, many and many a time crossed the river, the sun half an hour high;
I watched the Twelfth-month[1] sea-gulls—I saw them high in the air, floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,
I saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies, and left the rest in strong shadow, 30
I saw the slow-wheeling circles, and the gradual edging toward the south.
I too saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,

[1] In Quaker terminology, December.

Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Looked at the fine centrifugal spokes of light around the shape of my head in the sun-lit water, 34
Looked on the haze on the hills southward and southwestward,
Looked on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Looked toward the lower bay to notice the arriving ships,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops—saw the ships at anchor,
The sailors at work in the rigging, or out astride the spars, 40
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender serpentine pennants,
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the frolicsome crests and glistening, 45
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the granite storehouses by the docks,
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flanked on each side by the barges—the hay-boat, the belated lighter,
On the neighboring shore, the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high and glaringly into the night,
Casting their flicker of black, contrasted with wild red and yellow light, over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

IV

These, and all else, were to me the same as they are to you; 50
I project myself a moment to tell you—also I return.
I loved well those cities; I loved well the stately and rapid river;
The men and women I saw were all near to me;

Others the same—others who look back on me, because I looked forward to them
(The time will come, though I stop here today and tonight). 55

V

What is it, then, between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not.

VI

I too lived—Brooklyn of ample hills was mine;
I too walked the streets of Manhattan Island, and bathed in the waters around it; 60
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me
In the day, among crowds of people, sometimes they came upon me,
In my walks home late at night, or as I lay in my bed, they came upon me.
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution;
I too had received identity by my body; 65
That I was, I knew was of my body—and what I should be, I knew I should be of my body.

VII

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw patches down upon me also;
The best I had done seemed to me blank and suspicious;
My great thoughts, as I supposed them, were they not in reality meager? would not people laugh at me? 70
It is not you alone who know what it is to be evil;
I am he who knew what it was to be evil;
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabbed, blushed, resented, lied, stole, grudged,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak, 75

Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant;
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not wanting,
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting.

VIII

But I was Manhattanese, friendly and proud! 80
I was called by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young men as they saw me approaching or passing,
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their flesh against me as I sat,
Saw many I loved in the street, or ferry-boat, or public assembly, yet never told them a word,
Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing, sleeping,
Played the part that still looks back on the actor or actress, 85
The same old rôle, the rôle that is what we make it, as great as we like,
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

IX

Closer yet I approach you;
What thought you have of me, I had as much of you—I laid in my stores in advance;
I considered long and seriously of you before you were born. 90
Who was to know what should come home to me?
Who knows but I am enjoying this?
Who knows but I am as good as looking at you now, for all you cannot see me?

It is not you alone, nor I alone;
Not a few races, nor a few generations, nor a few centuries; 95
It is that each came, or comes, or shall come, from its due emission,

From the general center of all, and forming a part of all:
Everything indicates—the smallest does, and the largest does;
A necessary film envelops all, and envelops the Soul for a proper time.

X

Now I am curious what sight can ever be more stately and admirable to me than my mast-hemmed Manhattan, 100
My river and sunset, and my scallop-edged waves of flood-tide,
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and the belated lighter;
Curious what Gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach;
Curious what is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face, 104
Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you.

We understand, then, do we not?
What I promised without mentioning it, have you not accepted?
What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not accomplish, is accomplished, is it not?
What the push of reading could not start, is started by me personally, is it not?

XI

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide! 110
Frolic on, crested and scallop-edged waves!
Gorgeous clouds of the sun-set! drench with your splendor me, or the men and women generations after me;
Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta!—stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn!
Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers! 115
Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house, or street, or public assembly!
Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my nighest name!
Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!
Play the old rôle, the rôle that is great or small, according as one makes it! 120
Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking upon you;
Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste with the hasting current;
Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air;
Receive the summer sky, you water! and faithfully hold it, till all downcast eyes have time to take it from you;
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's head, in the sun-lit water; 125
Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sailed schooners, sloops, lighters!
Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lowered at sunset;
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses;
Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are;
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul; 130
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest aromas;
Thrive, cities! bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers;
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual;
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

XII

We descend upon you and all things—we arrest you all; 135
We realize the soul only by you, you faithful solids and fluids;

Through you color, form, location, sublimity, ideality;
Through you every proof, comparison, and all the suggestions and determinations of ourselves.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers! you novices!
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward; 140
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us;
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently within us;
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also;
You furnish your parts toward eternity;
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul. 145
[1856]

'When the Hounds of Spring are on Winter's Traces'

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

From "Atalanta in Calydon"

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous 5
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.[1]

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light, 10
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamor of waters, and with might

[1] See the story of Philomela in a dictionary.

Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendor and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers, 15
  Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
  Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
  Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring! 20
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
  And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over, 25
  And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
  The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten, 30
And in green underwood and cover
  Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
  Ripe grasses trammel a traveling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes 35
  From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
  The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root. 40

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
  Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
  The Mænad and the Bassarid;

And soft as lips that laugh and hide, 45
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
  The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
  Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes; 50
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
  Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare 55
  The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.
[1864]

The Marshes of Glynn

SIDNEY LANIER

[The scene of the poem is the seacoast marsh region of Glynn County, Georgia.]

Glooms of the live-oaks, beautiful-braided and woven
With intricate shades of the vines that myriad-cloven
  Clamber the forks of the multiform boughs,—
    Emerald twilights,—
    Virginal shy lights, 5
Wrought of the leaves to allure to the whisper of vows,
When lovers pace timidly down through the green colonnades
  Of the dim sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,
    Of the heavenly woods and glades,
That run to the radiant marginal sand-beach within 10
    The wide sea-marshes of Glynn;—

Beautiful glooms, soft dusks in the noon-day fire,—
Wildwood privacies, closets of lone desire,
Chamber from chamber parted with wavering arras of leaves,—
Cells for the passionate pleasure of prayer to the soul that grieves,

Pure with a sense of the passing of saints through the wood,
Cool for the dutiful weighing of ill with good;— 17

O braided dusks of the oak and woven shades of the vine,
While the riotous noon-day sun of the June-day long did shine
Ye held me fast in your heart and I held you fast in mine; 20
But now when the noon is no more, and riot is rest,
And the sun is a-wait at the ponderous gate of the West,
And the slant yellow beam down the wood-aisle doth seem
Like a lane into heaven that leads from a dream,— 24

Aye, now, when my soul all day hath drunken the soul of the oak,
And my heart is at ease from men, and the wearisome sound of the stroke
Of the scythe of time and the trowel of trade is low,
And belief overmasters doubt, and I know that I know,
And my spirit is grown to a lordly great compass within,
That the length and the breadth and the sweep of the marshes of Glynn 30
Will work me no fear like the fear they have wrought me of yore
When length was fatigue, and when breadth was but bitterness sore,
And when terror and shrinking and dreary unnamable pain
Drew over me out of the merciless miles of the plain,—

Oh, now, unafraid, I am fain to face 35
The vast sweet visage of space.
To the edge of the wood I am drawn, I am drawn,
Where the gray beach glimmering runs, as a belt of the dawn,
For a mete[1] and a mark
To the forest-dark;— 40
So:
Affable live-oak, leaning low—
Thus—with your favor—soft, with a reverent hand,

[1] boundary.

(Not lightly touching your person, Lord of the land!)
Bending your beauty aside, with a step I stand 45
On the firm-packed sand,
Free
By a world of marsh that borders a world of sea.

Sinuous southward and sinuous northward the shimmering band
Of the sand-beach fastens the fringe of the marsh to the folds of the land. 50
Inward and outward to northward and southward the beach-lines linger and curl
As a silver-wrought garment that clings to and follows the firm sweet limbs of a girl.
Vanishing, swerving, evermore curving again into sight,
Softly the sand-beach wavers away to a dim gray looping of light.
And what if behind me to westward the wall of the woods stands high? 55
The world lies east: how ample, the marsh and the sea and the sky!
A league and a league of marsh-grass, waist-high, broad in the blade,
Green, and all of a height, and unflecked with a light or a shade,
Stretch leisurely off, in a pleasant plain,
To the terminal blue of the main. 60

Oh, what is abroad in the marsh and the terminal sea?
Somehow my soul seems suddenly free
From the weighing of fate and the sad discussion of sin,
By the length and the breadth and the sweep of the marshes of Glynn.

Ye marshes, how candid and simple and nothing-withholding and free 65
Ye publish yourselves to the sky and offer yourselves to the sea!

Tolerant plains, that suffer the sea and the rains and the sun,
Ye spread and span like the catholic[1] man who hath mightily
won
God out of knowledge and good out of infinite pain
And sight out of blindness and purity out of a stain. 70

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the
skies:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod 75
I will heartily lay me a hold on the greatness of God:
Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of Glynn.

And the sea lends large, as the marsh: lo, out of his plenty the
sea
Pours fast: full soon the time of the flood-tide must be: 80
Look how the grace of the sea doth go
About and about through the intricate channels that flow
Here and there,
Everywhere,
Till his waters have flooded the uttermost creeks and the low-
lying lanes, 85
And the marsh is meshed with a million veins,
That like as with rosy and silvery essences flow
In the rose-and-silver evening glow.

Farewell, my lord Sun!
The creeks overflow: a thousand rivulets run 90
'Twixt the roots of the sod; the blades of the marsh-grass stir;
Passeth a hurrying sound of wings that westward whirr:
Passeth, and all is still; and the currents cease to run;
And the sea and the marsh are one.

[1] broad-minded, rich in experience.

How still the plains of the waters be! 95
The tide is in his ecstasy.
The tide is at his highest height:
And it is night.

And now from the Vast of the Lord will the waters of sleep
Roll in on the souls of men, 100
But who will reveal to our waking ken
The forms that swim and the shapes that creep
Under the waters of sleep?
And I would I could know what swimmeth below when the tide comes in
On the length and the breadth of the marvelous marshes of Glynn. 105

[1879]

Indian Summer[1]

EMILY DICKINSON

These are the days when birds come back,
A very few, a bird or two,
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies put on
The old, old sophistries of June,— 5
A blue and gold mistake.

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the bee,
Almost thy plausibility
Induces my belief,

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear, 10
And softly through the altered air
Hurries a timid leaf!

[1] Copyright, Little, Brown & Company, Boston.

Oh, sacrament of summer days,
Oh, last communion in the haze,
Permit a child to join, 15

Thy sacred emblems to partake,
Thy consecrated bread to break,
Taste thine immortal wine!
[1890]

A Vagabond Song

BLISS CARMAN

There is something in the autumn that is native to my blood—
Touch of manner, hint of mood;
And my heart is like a rime,
With the yellow and the purple and the crimson keeping time.

The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry 5
Of bugles going by.
And my lonely spirit thrills
To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills.

There is something in October sets the gypsy blood astir;
We must rise and follow her, 10
When from every hill of flame
She calls and calls each vagabond by name.
[1896]

Trees

JOYCE KILMER

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day, 5
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain. 10

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.
[1914]

Birches

ROBERT FROST

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them 5
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust— 11
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves: 16
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun. 20
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
(Now am I free to be poetical?)

I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows— 25
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again 30
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away 35
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish, 40
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood 45
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over. 50
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree, 55
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.

That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches. 60
[1916]

The Chinese Nightingale[1]

VACHEL LINDSAY

'How, how,' he said. 'Friend Chang,' I said,
'San Francisco sleeps as the dead—
Ended license, lust and play:
Why do you iron the night away?
Your big clock speaks with a deadly sound, 5
With a tick and a wail till dawn comes round.
While the monster shadows glower and creep,
What can be better for man than sleep?'

'I will tell you a secret,' Chang replied;
'My breast with vision is satisfied, 10
And I see green trees and fluttering wings,
And my deathless bird from Shanghai sings.'
Then he lit five fire-crackers in a pan.
'Pop, pop,' said the fire-crackers, 'cra-cra-crack.'
He lit a joss stick long and black. 15
Then the proud gray joss in the corner stirred;
On his wrist appeared a gray small bird,
And this was the song of the gray small bird:
'Where is the princess, loved forever,
Who made Chang first of the kings of men?' 20

And the joss in the corner stirred again;
And the carved dog, curled in his arms, awoke,
Barked forth a smoke-cloud that whirled and broke.
It piled in a maze round the ironing-place,
And there on the snowy table wide 25
Stood a Chinese lady of high degree,

[1] From *The Chinese Nightingale and Other Poems*, by Vachel Lindsay. Copyright, 1917, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

With a scornful, witching, tea-rose face . . .
Yet she put away all form and pride,
And laid her glimmering veil aside
With a childlike smile for Chang and for me. 30

The walls fell back, night was aflower,
The table gleamed in a moonlit bower,
While Chang, with a countenance carved of stone,
Ironed and ironed, all alone.
And thus she sang to the busy man Chang: 35
'Have you forgotten . . .
Deep in the ages, long, long ago,
I was your sweetheart, there on the sand—
Storm-worn beach of the Chinese land?
We sold our grain in the peacock town 40
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown—
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown . . .

When all the world was drinking blood
From the skulls of men and bulls
And all the world had swords and clubs of stone, 45
We drank our tea in China beneath the sacred spice-trees,
And heard the curled waves of the harbor moan.
And this gray bird, in Love's first spring,
With a bright-bronze breast and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his caroling. 50
Do you remember, ages after,
At last the world we were born to own?
You were the heir of the yellow throne—
The world was the field of the Chinese man
And we were the pride of the Sons of Han? 55
We copied deep books and we carved in jade,
And wove blue silks in the mulberry shade . . .'

'I remember, I remember
That Spring came on forever,

That Spring came on forever,' 60
Said the Chinese nightingale.

My heart was filled with marvel and dream,
Though I saw the western street-lamps gleam,
Though dawn was bringing the western day,
Though Chang was a laundryman ironing away . . . 65
Mingled there with the streets and alleys,
The railroad-yard and the clock-tower bright,
Demon clouds crossed ancient valleys;
Across wide lotus-ponds of light
I marked a giant firefly's flight. 70

And the lady, rosy-red,
Flourished her fan, her shimmering fan,
Stretched her hand toward Chang, and said:
'Do you remember,
Ages after, 75
Our palace of heart-red stone?
Do you remember
The little doll-faced children
With their lanterns full of moon-fire,
That came from all the empire 80
Honoring the throne?—
The loveliest fête and carnival
Our world had ever known?
The sages sat about us
With their heads bowed in their beards, 85
With proper meditation on the sight.

Confucius was not born;
We lived in those great days
Confucius later said were lived aright . . .
And this gray bird, on that day of spring, 90
With a bright-bronze breast, and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his caroling.

Late at night his tune was spent.
Peasants,
Sages, 95
Children,
Homeward went,
And then the bronze bird sang for you and me.
We walked alone. Our hearts were high and free.
I had a silvery name, I had a silvery name, 100
I had a silvery name—do you remember
The name you cried beside the tumbling sea?'

Chang turned not to the lady slim—
He bent to his work, ironing away;
But she was arch, and knowing and glowing, 105
And the bird on his shoulder spoke for him.

'Darling . . . darling . . . darling . . . darling . . .'
Said the Chinese nightingale.

The great gray joss on a rustic shelf,
Rakish and shrewd, with his collar awry, 110
Sang impolitely, as though by himself,
Drowning with his bellowing the nightingale's cry:
'Back through a hundred, hundred years
Hear the waves as they climb the piers,
Hear the howl of the silver seas, 115
Hear the thunder.
Hear the gongs of holy China
How the waves and tunes combine
In a rhythmic clashing wonder,
Incantation old and fine: 120
"Dragons, dragons, Chinese dragons,
Red fire-crackers, and green fire-crackers,
And dragons, dragons, Chinese dragons."'

Then the lady, rosy-red,
Turned to her lover Chang and said: 125

'Dare you forget that turquoise dawn,
When we stood in our mist-hung velvet lawn,
And worked a spell this great joss taught
Till a God of the Dragons was charmed and caught?
From the flag high over our palace home 130
He flew to our feet in rainbow foam—
A king of beauty and tempest and thunder
Panting to tear our sorrows asunder.
A dragon of fair adventure and wonder.
We mounted the back of that royal slave 135
With thoughts of desire that were noble and grave.
We swam down the shore to the dragon-mountains,
We whirled to the peaks and the fiery fountains.
To our secret ivory house we were borne.
We looked down the wonderful wing-filled regions 140
Where the dragons darted in glimmering legions.
Right by my breast the nightingale sang;
The old rimes rang in the sunlit mist
That we this hour regain—
Song-fire for the brain. 145
When my hands and my hair and my feet you kissed,
When you cried for your heart's new pain,
What was my name in the dragon-mist,
In the rings of rainbowed rain?'

'Sorrow and love, glory and love,' 150
Said the Chinese nightingale.
'Sorrow and love, glory and love,'
Said the Chinese nightingale.

And now the joss broke in with his song:
'Dying ember, bird of Chang, 155
Soul of Chang, do you remember?—
Ere you returned to the shining harbor
There were pirates by ten thousand

Descended on the town
In vessels mountain-high and red and brown, 160
Moon-ships that climbed the storms and cut the skies.
On their prows were painted terrible bright eyes.
But I was then a wizard and a scholar and a priest;
I stood upon the sand;
With lifted hand I looked upon them 165
And sunk their vessels with my wizard eyes,
And the stately lacquer-gate made safe again.
Deep, deep below the bay, the sea-weed and the spray,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies.' 170

Then this did the noble lady say:
'Bird, do you dream of our home-coming day
When you flew like a courier on before
From the dragon-peak to our palace-door,
And we drove the steed in your singing path— 175
The ramping dragon of laughter and wrath:
And found our city all aglow,
And knighted this joss that decked it so?
There were golden fishes in the purple river
And silver fishes and rainbow fishes. 180
There were golden junks in the laughing river,
And silver junks and rainbow junks:
There were golden lilies by the bay and river,
And silver lilies and tiger-lilies
And tinkling wind-bells in the gardens of the town 185
By the black-lacquer gate
Where walked in state
The kind king Chang
And his sweetheart mate . . .
With his flag-born dragon 190
And his crown of pearl . . . and . . . jade,
And his nightingale reigning in the mulberry shade,

And sailors and soldiers on the sea-sands brown,
And priests who bowed them down to your song—
By the city called Han, the peacock town, 195
By the city called Han, the nightingale town,
The nightingale town.'
Then sang the bird, so strangely gay,
Fluttering, fluttering, ghostly and gray,
A vague, unraveling, final tune, 200
Like a long unwinding silk cocoon;
Sang as though for the soul of him
Who ironed away in that bower dim:—
  'I have forgotten
  Your dragons great, 205
  Merry and mad and friendly and bold.
  Dim is your proud lost palace-gate.
I vaguely know
There were heroes of old,
Troubles more than the heart could hold, 210
There were wolves in the woods
Yet lambs in the fold,
Nests in the top of the almond tree . . .
The evergreen tree . . . and the mulberry tree . . .
Life and hurry and joy forgotten, 215
Years on years I but half-remember . . .
Man is a torch, then ashes soon,
May and June, then dead December,
Dead December, then again June.
Who shall end my dream's confusion? 220
Life is a loom, weaving illusion . . .
I remember, I remember
There were ghostly veils and laces . . .
In the shadowy bowery places . . .
With lovers' ardent faces 225
Bending to one another,
Speaking each his part.

They infinitely echo
In the red cave of my heart.
"Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart," 230
They said to one another.
They spoke, I think, of perils past.
They spoke, I think, of peace at last.
One thing I remember:
Spring came on forever, 235
Spring came on forever,'
Said the Chinese nightingale.

[1917]

The Rear-Guard[1]

Hindenburg Line, April, 1917

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

Groping along the tunnel, step by step,
He winked his prying torch with patching glare
From side to side, and sniffed the unwholesome air.

Tins, boxes, bottles, shapes too vague to know,
A mirror smashed, the mattress from a bed; 5
And he, exploring fifty feet below
The rosy gloom of battle overhead.

Tripping, he grabbed the wall; saw someone lie
Humped at his feet, half-hidden by a rug,
And stooped to give the sleeper's arm a tug. 10
'I'm looking for headquarters.' No reply.
'God blast your neck!' (For days he'd had no sleep.)
'Get up and guide me through this stinking place.'
Savage, he kicked a soft, unanswering heap,
And flashed his beam across the livid face 15

[1] By permission. From *Counter-Attack*, by Siegfried Sassoon. Copyright by E. P. Dutton & Company.

Terribly glaring up, whose eyes yet wore
Agony dying hard ten days before;
And fists of fingers clutched a blackening wound.

Alone he staggered on until he found
Dawn's ghost that filtered down a shafted stair 20
To the dazed, muttering creatures underground
Who hear the boom of shells in muffled sound.
At last, with sweat of horror in his hair,
He climbed through darkness to the twilight air,
Unloading hell behind him step by step. 25
[1918]

Tewkesbury Road[1]

JOHN MASEFIELD

It is good to be out on the road, and going one knows not where,
Going through meadow and village, one knows not whither nor why;
Through the gray light drift of the dust, in the keen cool rush of the air,
Under the flying white clouds, and the broad blue lift of the sky.

And to halt at the chattering brook, in the tall green fern at the brink 5
Where the harebell grows, and the gorse, and the foxgloves purple and white;
Where the shy-eyed delicate deer troop down to the brook to drink
When the stars are mellow and large at the coming on of the night.

O, to feel the beat of the rain, and the homely smell of the earth,
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, a joy past power of words;

[1] From *The Story of a Round-House and Other Poems*, by John Masefield. Copyright, 1913, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

And the blessed green comely meadows are all a-ripple with mirth
At the noise of the lambs at play and the dear wild cry of the birds. 12

The Circus

ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

Reaching along to the distance, monotonous blocks on blocks,
These barriers to beauty and pleasure, the dreary gray fronts of the docks,
Stifle, oppress and excite me, sharpen my thirst for the sort
Of three-ring show, full of glamour and go, you find in a bustling port.

The tight-sealed portals and windows, the walls without loophole or chink, 5
With their stolid, insolent calm, enrage me and make me think
Of the baffled quests of my boyhood when I turned truant and went
Chink-hunting the sinuous, too continuous dreary gray circus tent.

And splashes of maddening music come filtering, filtering through
To harrow my thirsting ears as the circus band used to do: 10
Rough staves of a mariners' chantey, winches that rattle and thump,
Brass trumpets ablare on a liner out there, the roar of her elephant's trump.

Now, sweet as the perfume of sawdust or monkeys or pink lemonade,
Wild as the bouquet of lions or musk from the lovely mermaid,
Is the smell that stings my nostrils, of ozone, of tar and of brine,
And the cloying fume from a shuttered room of spilt Canary wine. 16

At length a chink in the dock-wall, a hole in the sideshow tent,
Where giants from Ganges and Tigris and Volga and Nile go bent
Under barrels of Bornean spices, the mellow baled rugs of Tabriz,
Russian wolves in a cage apoplectic with rage, and the trunks of mahogany trees. 20

At last, with the end of the dock-wall, the churn of the sunlit Sound.
Now ho! for a jollier pageant than canvas could ever surround!
Cordage and spars beat time to the song of the unseen breakers,
While the romping hulls and the madcap gulls keep pace with the music makers.

There's a welcome lump in my throat that says I can take more joy 25
In the beauty of harboring ships than ever I took as a boy
In the chariot race of the llamas, the dance of the Siamese twins,
The learned mink or the missing link or the dame with the multiple chins.

Oh, I like Pantaloon with the slapstick, but funnier now to me
Is a fussy, officious tug, that clown of the three-ring sea. 30
And fairer than pink silk riders or elephants marching to war
Are miles on miles of barnacled piles and the outbound liner's roar.

[1925]

Reflective Poetry, chiefly Lyrical

A great many poems express meditative reflection rather than intense and momentary impulse. If these are too purely didactic, meant too obviously for instruction, they come near the boundary of prose. Extremely didactic poetry differs from prose only in the special emotional appeal conveyed by the verse alone. But in much reflective poetry the ideas are accompanied by genuine poetic feeling, and the range of the writer's reflection serves to give wisdom and humanity to the expression of his feeling.

Contemplative reflection occurs at times in most classes of poetry. When it is heightened by imaginative insight and by emotion, it gives rise to noble poetry. When it is set forth as a blunt statement of rational thought, it is essentially prosaic. Worst of all, when a moral tag is added to a poem already complete in itself, the result is anticlimax. Sometimes, as in Gay's *Fables* and in Holmes's "One Hoss Shay," the tag justifies itself and seems a structural part of the poem.

The older didactic poetry, dealing with medicine, drugs, health, literary criticism, æsthetics, philosophy, theology, and the like, has been almost entirely supplanted by prose. But reflective poetry, dealing with man's reactions to the problems and experiences of life, is forever modern. For poetry is man's imaginative adjustment to the world in which he lives:

The poetry of earth is never dead.

'Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun'

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From "Cymbeline"

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
  Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
  Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must, 5
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
  Thou art past the tyrant's stroke.
Care no more to clothe and eat;
  To thee the reed is as the oak. 10
The scepter, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
  Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone[1];
Fear not slander, censure rash; 15
  Thou hast finished joy and moan.
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign[2] to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
  Nor no witchcraft charm thee! 20
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
  Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have,
And renowned be thy grave!

[*c.* 1610–1611]

[1] thunderbolt. [2] yield.

Love

GEORGE HERBERT

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning, 5
If I lacked anything.

'A guest,' I answered, 'worthy to be here':
Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee!' 10
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not,' says Love, 'who bore the blame?'
'My dear, then I will serve.' 16
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'
So I did sit and eat.

[1633]

Death's Final Conquest

JAMES SHIRLEY

From "The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses"

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armor against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings:
Scepter and crown 5
Must tumble down,

And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
  And plant fresh laurels where they kill; 10
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
  They tame but one another still:
    Early or late
    They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath 15
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow,
  Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon Death's purple altar now,
  See, where the victor-victim bleeds: 20
    Your heads must come
    To the cold tomb;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

[*c.* 1640; printed 1659]

On the Countess Dowager of Pembroke

WILLIAM BROWNE

[The subject of this epitaph was the sister of Sir Philip Sidney and the mother of the Earl of Pembroke.]

Underneath this sable herse[1]
Lies the subject of all verse:
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:
Death, ere thou hast slain another
Fair and learn'd and good as she, 5
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

[*c.* 1643]

[1] tomb.

'Go, Lovely Rose'!

EDMUND WALLER

Go, lovely Rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be. 5

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died. 10

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired. 15

Then die! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair! 20
[1645]

The Retreat[1]

HENRY VAUGHAN

Happy those early days, when I
Shined in my angel-infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,

[1] This poem should be compared with Wordsworth's ode "Intimations of Immortality."

Or taught my soul to fancy aught 5
But a white, celestial thought;
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first Love,
And looking back—at that short space—
Could see a glimpse of His bright face; 10
When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;
Before I taught my tongue to wound 15
My conscience with a sinful sound,
Or had the black art to dispense
A several sin to every sense,
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness. 20

O how I long to travel back,
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain
Where first I left my glorious train;
From whence the enlightened spirit sees 25
That shady city of palm trees.
But ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way!
Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move; 30
And when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came, return.
[1650]

To a Mountain Daisy

On Turning One down with the Plow in April, 1786

ROBERT BURNS

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun[1] crush amang the stoure[2]
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r, 5
Thou bonie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet
Wi' spreckl'd breast, 10
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth 15
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield
High shelt'ring woods an' wa's[3] maun shield: 20
But thou, beneath the random bield[4]
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie[5] stibble-field
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad, 25
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,

[1] must. [2] dust. [3] walls. [4] shelter. [5] barren.

Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies! 30

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd
And guileless trust;
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid 35
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskillful he to note the card[1]
Of prudent lore, 40
Till billows rage and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering Worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n 45
To mis'ry's brink;
Till, wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He ruin'd sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date; 50
Stern Ruin's plowshare drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight
Shall be thy doom.

[1786]

[1] mariner's compass.

Night

WILLIAM BLAKE

The sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
  The moon, like a flower, 5
  In heaven's high bower,
  With silent delight
  Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy grove,
Where flocks have ta'en delight. 10
Where lambs have nibbled, silent move
The feet of angels bright;
  Unseen, they pour blessing,
  And joy without ceasing,
  On each bud and blossom, 15
  And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest,
Where birds are cover'd warm;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm. 20
  If they see any weeping
  That should have been sleeping,
  They pour sleep on their head,
  And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey, 25
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep.
  But if they rush dreadful,
  The angels, most heedful, 30

Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold,
And pitying the tender cries, 35
And walking round the fold,
Saying, 'Wrath, by his meekness,
And, by his health, sickness
Are driven away
From our immortal day. 40

'And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
I can lie down and sleep;
Or think on him who bore thy name,
Graze after thee, and weep.
For, wash'd in life's river, 45
My bright mane forever
Shall shine like the gold
As I guard o'er the fold.'

[1794]

The Tiger

WILLIAM BLAKE

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies 5
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart? 10

And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp 15
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee? 20

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
[1794]

'She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways'

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,[1]
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be; 10
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!
[1800]

[1] A stream in northwestern England.

'A Slumber did my Spirit Seal'

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

A slumber did my spirit seal;
  I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
  The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force; 5
  She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
  With rocks, and stones, and trees.

[1800]

Rose Aylmer

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

[Rose Aylmer, daughter of Baron Aylmer, descended, as Landor maintained, from the ancient aristocracy of England, was one of Landor's most cherished friends. She died in India in 1800, at the age of twenty. Landor immediately afterward composed the stanzas which some critics regard as forming the most perfect lyric of the nineteenth century.]

Ah, what avails the sceptered race,
  Ah, what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
  Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes 5
  May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
  I consecrate to thee.

[1806]

On his Seventy-fifth Birthday

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,
  Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
  It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

[1853]

To a Waterfowl

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
  Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
  Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
  On the chafed ocean side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,—
The desert and illimitable air,—
  Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
  Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven 25
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight, 30
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

[1818]

To a Skylark

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. 5

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest. 10

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun. 15

The pale purple even
  Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven
  In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen,—but yet I hear thy shrill delight, 20

Keen as are the arrows
  Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
  In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there. 25

All the earth and air
  With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
  From one lonely cloud 29
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
  What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
  Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody. 35

Like a Poet hidden
  In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden
  Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not: 40

Like a high-born maiden
  In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
  Soul in secret hour 44
With music sweet as love,—which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
  In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
  Its aërial hue 49
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
  In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
  Till the scent it gives 54
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
  On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
  All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass. 60

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
  What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
  Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine. 65

Chorus Hymeneal,
  Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine, would be all
  But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want. 70

What objects are the fountains
  Of thy happy strain?
What fields or waves or mountains?
  What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain? 75

With thy clear keen joyance
  Languor cannot be;
Shadow of annoyance
  Never came near thee;
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety. 80

Waking or asleep
  Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
  Than we mortals dream—
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream? 85

We look before and after,
  And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
  With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought. 90

Yet if we could scorn
  Hate and pride and fear;
If we were things born
  Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near. 95

Better than all measures
  Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
  That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground! 100

Teach me half the gladness
  That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
  From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then—as I am listening now. 105

[1820]

Israfel

EDGAR ALLAN POE

And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.[1] —Koran

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
  Whose heart-strings are a lute;
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell), 5
Ceasing their hymns,[2] attend the spell
  Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
  In her highest noon,
  The enamored moon 10
Blushes with love,
  While, to listen, the red levin
  (With the rapid Pleiads, even,
  Which were seven)
  Pauses in Heaven. 15

And they say (the starry choir
  And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
  By which he sits and sings, 20
The trembling living wire
  Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,[3]
  Where deep thoughts are a duty,
Where Love's a grown-up God, 25

[1] Poe inserts the words "whose heart-strings are a lute."
[2] The legendary music of the spheres.
[3] "Skies" is the grammatical object of "trod."

Where the Houri glances are
  Imbued with all the beauty
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore thou art not wrong,
  Israfeli, who despisest 30
An unimpassioned song;
To thee the laurels belong,
  Best bard, because the wisest:
Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above 35
  With thy burning measures suit:
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
  With the fervor of thy lute:
  Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this 40
  Is a world of sweets and sours;
  Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
  Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell 45
Where Israfel
  Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
  A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell 50
  From my lyre within the sky.
[1831]

The Pillar of the Cloud

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
  Lead Thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see 5
The distant scene,—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on! 10
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till 15
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.
[1833]

The Bridge of Sighs

THOMAS HOOD

One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!
Take her up tenderly, 5
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements; 10
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing;

Take her up instantly,
  Loving, not loathing.

Touch her not scornfully; 15
Think of her mournfully,
  Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
  Now is pure womanly. 20

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
  Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonor,
Death has left on her 25
  Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
  One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
  Oozing so clammily. 30

Loop up her tresses
  Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
  Where was her home? 35

Who was her father?
  Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
  Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one 40
Still, and a nearer one
  Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity

Under the sun! 45
Oh, it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none!

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly 50
Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged. 55

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement, 60
She stood with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver;
But not the dark arch, 65
Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled—
Anywhere, anywhere 70
Out of the world!

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran,—
Over the brink of it, 75
Picture it—think of it,

Dissolute Man!
Lave in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly, 80
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly, 85
Decently, kindly,
Smooth and compose them;
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring 90
Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fixed on futurity.

Perishing gloomily, 95
Spurred by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her rest.—
Cross her hands humbly, 100
As if praying dumbly,
Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,
Her evil behavior,
And leaving, with meekness, 105
Her sins to her Savior!

[1844]

The Old Stoic

EMILY BRONTË

Riches I hold in light esteem,
  And Love I laugh to scorn;
And lust of fame was but a dream
  That vanished with the morn:

And if I pray, the only prayer 5
  That moves my lips for me
Is, 'Leave the heart that now I bear,
  And give me liberty!'

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
  'Tis all that I implore; 10
In life and death a chainless soul,
  With courage to endure.

[1846]

Memorabilia

ROBERT BROWNING

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
  And did he stop and speak to you
And did you speak to him again?
  How strange it seems and new!

But you were living before that, 5
  And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
  My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
  And a certain use in the world no doubt, 10
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
  'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather
  And there I put inside my breast
A molted feather, an eagle-feather! 15
  Well, I forget the rest.

[1855]

Days

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will: 5
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached[1] garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late, 10
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

[1857]

The Garden of Proserpine

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Here, where the world is quiet,
  Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
  In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing 5
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
  A sleepy world of streams.

[1] With twigs or vines interlaced to form a hedge or an arbor.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
  And men that laugh and weep; 10
Of what may come hereafter
  For men that sow to reap:
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers 15
  And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
  And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
  Weak ships and spirits steer; 20
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
  And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice, 25
  No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
  Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes 30
Save this whereout she crushes
  For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
  In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber 35
  All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
  Comes out of darkness morn. 40

Though one were strong as seven,
  He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
  Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses, 45
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
  In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
  Crowned with calm leaves, she stands 50
Who gathers all things mortal
  With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her 55
  From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
  She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
  The life of fruits and corn; 60
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
  And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither, 65
  The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
  And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken, 70
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
  Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
  And joy was never sure;
Today will die tomorrow; 75
  Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
  Weeps that no loves endure. 80

From too much love of living,
  From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
  Whatever gods may be
That no life lives forever; 85
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
  Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
  Nor any change of light: 90
Nor sound of waters shaken,
  Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal 95
  In an eternal night.

[1866]

Dover Beach

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. 5

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling, 10
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago 15
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea. 20

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, 25
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems 30
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain 35
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

[1867]

The Eternal Goodness

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

O friends! with whom my feet have trod
  The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God
  And love of man I bear.

I trace your lines of argument; 5
  Your logic linked and strong
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
  And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
  To hold your iron creeds: 10
Against the words ye bid me speak
  My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
  Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not 15
  The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
  Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
  The love and power of God. 20

Ye praise His justice; even such
  His pitying love I deem:
Ye seek a king; I fain would touch
  The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods 25
  A world of pain and loss;

I hear our Lord's beatitudes
  And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
  Myself, alas! I know: 30
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
  Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
  I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust, 35
  A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
  I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
  The world confess its sin. 40

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
  And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
  I know that God is good!

Not mine to look where cherubim 45
  And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
  Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
  I dare not throne above, 50
I know not of His hate,—I know
  His goodness and His love.

I dimly guess from blessings known
  Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own 55
  His judgments too are right.

I long for household voices gone,
  For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
  And He can do no wrong. 60

I know not what the future hath
  Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
  His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak 65
  To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
  But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
  Nor works my faith to prove; 70
I can but give the gifts He gave,
  And plead His love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea
  I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me 75
  On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
  Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
  Beyond His love and care. 80

O brothers! if my faith is vain,
  If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me that my feet may gain
  The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen 85
  Thy creatures as they be,

Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee!
[1867]

Ode[1]

HENRY TIMROD

Sung on the Occasion of Decorating the Graves of the Confederate Dead at Magnolia Cemetery, Charleston, South Carolina, 1867

Sleep sweetly in your humble graves,
Sleep, martyrs of a fallen cause;
Though yet no marble column craves
The pilgrim here to pause.

In seeds of laurel in the earth
The blossom of your fame is blown,
And somewhere, waiting for its birth,
The shaft is in the stone!

Meanwhile, behalf the tardy years
Which keep in trust your storied tombs,
Behold! your sisters bring their tears,
And these memorial blooms.

Small tributes! but your shades will smile
More proudly on these wreaths today,
Than when some cannon-molded pile
Shall overlook this bay.

Stoop, angels, hither from the skies!
There is no holier spot of ground
Than where defeated valor lies,
By mourning beauty crowned.
[Charleston, 1867]

[1] This selection from Timrod is reprinted from the Memorial Edition through the courtesy of the holder of the copyright, the Johnson Publishing Company, Richmond, Virginia.

From Ode

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

We are the music makers,
  And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
  And sitting by desolate streams; —
World-losers and world-forsakers, 5
  On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
  Of the world forever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities, 10
  And out of a fabulous story
  We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
  Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure 15
  Can trample a kingdom down.

We, in the ages lying
  In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
  And Babel itself in our mirth; 20
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
  To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
  Or one that is coming to birth.

[1874]

'Out of the Night that Covers Me'

I.M.[1] *R. T. Hamilton Bruce*

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Out of the night that covers me,
  Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
  For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance 5
  I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
  My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
  Looms but the Horror of the shade, 10
And yet the menace of the years
  Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
  How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate: 15
  I am the captain of my soul.

[1875]

Opportunity

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL

This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream:—
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner 5
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.
A craven hung along the battle's edge,

[1] In Memoriam. This poem is frequently called "Invictus" (Unconquered).

And thought, 'Had I a sword of keener steel—
That blue blade that the king's son bears,—but this
Blunt thing!' he snapt and flung it from his hand, 10
And lowering crept away and left the field.
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle shout 15
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,
And saved a great cause that heroic day.
[1888]

'I Asked no Other Thing'[1]

EMILY DICKINSON

I asked no other thing,
No other was denied.
I offered Being for it;
The mighty merchant smiled.

Brazil? He twirled a button, 5
Without a glance my way:
'But, madam, is there nothing else
That we can show today?'
[1890]

The Hound of Heaven[2]

FRANCIS THOMPSON

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter. 5

[1] Copyright, Little, Brown & Company, Boston.
[2] Used by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., New York, and John Lane, The Bodley Head, Limited, London.

Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase, 10
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.' 15

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followed,
Yet was I sore adread 20
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside)
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled, 25
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon,
I said to dawn: Be sudden—to eve: Be soon; 30
With thy young skyey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy, 35
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.

But whether they swept, smoothly fleet, 40
The long savannas of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue. 45
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat— 50
'Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.'

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies, 55
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair. 60
'Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me' (said I) 'your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning 65
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azure daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is, 70
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring.'
So it was done:

I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies. 75
I knew all the swift importings
On the willful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumed of the wild sea-snortings;
All that's born or dies 80
Rose and drooped with—made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers 85
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine; 90
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's gray cheek. 95
For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound *I* speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe me, 100
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and nigh draws the chase, 105
With unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noised Feet

A voice comes yet more fleet— 109
'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me.'

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenseless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke, 115
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years— 120
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist; 125
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding: cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah! is Thy love indeed 130
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
Ah! must—
Designer infinite!— 134
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind. 140
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?

I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity, 145
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again;
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned; 150
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?
Now of that long pursuit 155
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
'And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou flyest Me! 160

'Strange, piteous, futile thing!
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught' (He said),
'And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited— 165
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me? 170
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home: 175
Rise, clasp My hand, and come.'

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest, 180
I am He whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.'

[1893]

Evolution

JOHN BANNISTER TABB

Out of the dusk a shadow,
Then a spark;
Out of the cloud a silence,
Then a lark;
Out of the heart a rapture, 5
Then a pain;
Out of the dead, cold ashes,
Life again.

[*c.* 1894]

Fame

JOHN BANNISTER TABB

Their noonday never knows
What names immortal are:
'Tis night alone that shows
How star surpasseth star.

[*c.* 1897]

Each in His Own Tongue[1]

WILLIAM HERBERT CARRUTH

A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,

[1] From *Each in His Own Tongue and Other Poems*, by William Herbert Carruth. Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London.

A jellyfish and a saurian,
  And caves where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty 5
  And a face turned from the clod,—
Some call it Evolution,
  And others call it God.

A haze on the far horizon,
  The infinite, tender sky, 10
The ripe, rich tint of the cornfields,
  And the wild geese sailing high;
And all over upland and lowland
  The charm of the golden-rod,—
Some of us call it Autumn, 15
  And others call it God.

Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
  When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
  Come welling and surging in: 20
Come from the mystic ocean
  Whose rim no foot has trod,—
Some of us call it Longing,
  And others call it God.

A picket frozen on duty, 25
  A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
  And Jesus on the rood;
And millions who, humble and nameless,
  The straight, hard pathway plod,— 30
Some call it Consecration,
  And others call it God.

[1895]

The Memory of Earth

"Æ" (George William Russell)

In the wet dusk silver sweet,
Down the violet scented ways,
As I moved with quiet feet
I was met by mighty days.

On the hedge the hanging dew 5
Glassed the eve and stars and skies;
While I gazed a madness grew
Into thundered battle cries.

Where the hawthorn glimmered white,
Flashed the spear and fell the stroke— 10
Ah, what faces pale and bright
Where the dazzling battle broke!

There a hero-hearted queen
With young beauty lit the van:
Gone! the darkness flowed between 15
All the ancient wars of man.

While I paced the valley's gloom
Where the rabbits pattered near,
Shone a temple and a tomb
With the legend carven clear: 20

Time put by a myriad fates
That her day might dawn in glory;
Death made wide a million gates
So to close her tragic story.

Recessional

RUDYARD KIPLING

God of our fathers, known of old,
  Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
  Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, 5
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
  The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
  An humble and a contrite heart. 10
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;
  On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday 15
  Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
  Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe, 20
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
  Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust 25
  In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
  And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord! 30

[1897]

The Man with the Hoe[1]

EDWIN MARKHAM

[Written after seeing Millet's world-famous painting of a brutalized toiler.]

God made man in his own image,
in the image of God made He him.—Genesis

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair, 5
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within his brain? 10

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passions of Eternity?
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns 15
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?
Down all the caverns of Hell to their last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul— 20
More packed with danger to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song, 25

[1] Copyright, 1899, 1924, by Edwin Markham and used by his permission.

The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
Thru this dread shape the suffering ages look,
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Thru this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned, and disinherited, 30
Cries protest to the Powers behind the world,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul quenched? 35
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies, 40
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
How will the Future reckon with this Man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores? 45
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb Terror shall rise to judge the world,
After the silence of the centuries?

[1899]

On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines

William Vaughn Moody

Streets of the roaring town,
Hush for him, hush, be still!
He comes, who was stricken down
Doing the word of our will

Hush! Let him have his state, 5
Give him his soldier's crown.
The grists of trade can wait
Their grinding at the mill,
But he cannot wait for his honor, now the trumpet has been blown;
Wreathe pride now for his granite brow, lay love on his breast of stone. 10

Toll! Let the great bells toll
Till the clashing air is dim.
Did we wrong this parted soul?
We will make it up to him.
Toll! Let him never guess 15
What work we set him to.
Laurel, laurel, yes;
He did what we bade him do.
Praise, and never a whispered hint but the fight he fought was good;
Never a word that the blood on his sword was his country's own heart's-blood. 20

A flag for the soldier's bier
Who dies that his land may live;
O, banners, banners here,
That he doubt not nor misgive!
That he heed not from the tomb 25
The evil days draw near
When the nation, robed in gloom,
With its faithless past shall strive.
Let him never dream that his bullet's scream went wide of its island mark,
Home to the heart of his darling land where she stumbled and sinned in the dark. 30

[1901]

Caliban in the Coal Mines[1]

LOUIS UNTERMEYER

God, we don't like to complain;
  We know that the mine is no lark.
But—there's the pools from the rain;
  But—there's the cold and the dark.

God, You don't know what it is— 5
  You, in Your well-lighted sky,
Watching the meteors whizz;
  Warm, with the sun always by.

God, if You had but the moon
  Stuck in Your cap for a lamp, 10
Even You'd tire of it soon,
  Down in the dark and the damp.

Nothing but blackness above
  And nothing that moves but the cars . . .
God, if You wish for our love, 15
  Fling us a handful of stars!

[1912]

Renascence

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

All I could see from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood;
I turned and looked another way,
And saw three islands in a bay.
So with my eyes I traced the line 5
Of the horizon, thin and fine,
Straight around till I was come
Back to where I'd started from;

[1] Caliban, half man and half beast, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

And all I saw from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood. 10
Over there things I could not see;
There were the things that bounded me;
And I could touch them with my hand,
Almost, I thought, from where I stand.
And all at once things seemed so small 15
My breath came short, and scarce at all.
But, sure, the sky is big, I said;
Miles and miles above my head;
So here upon my back I'll lie
And look my fill into the sky. 20
And so I looked, and, after all,
The sky was not so very tall.
The sky, I said, must somewhere stop,
And—sure enough!—I see the top!
The sky, I thought, is not so grand; 25
I 'most could touch it with my hand!
And, reaching up my hand to try,
I screamed to feel it touch the sky.

I screamed, and—lo!—Infinity
Came down and settled over me; 30
Forced back my scream into my chest,
Bent back my arm upon my breast,
And, pressing of the Undefined
The definition on my mind,
Held up before my eyes a glass 35
Through which my shrinking sight did pass
Until it seemed I must behold
Immensity made manifold;
Whispered me a word whose sound
Deafened the air for worlds around, 40
And brought unmuffled to my ears
The gossiping of friendly spheres,

The creaking of the tented sky,
The ticking of Eternity.

I saw and heard, and knew at last 45
The How and Why of all things, past
And present, and forevermore.
The universe, cleft to the core,
Lay open to my probing sense
That, sick'ning, I would fain pluck thence 50
But could not,—nay! But needs must suck
At the great wound, and could not pluck
My lips away till I had drawn
All venom out.—Ah, fearful pawn!
For my omniscience I paid toll 55
In infinite remorse of soul.
All sin was of my sinning, all
Atoning mine, and mine the gall
Of all regret. Mine was the weight
Of every brooded wrong, the hate 60
That stood behind each envious thrust,
Mine every greed, mine every lust.
And all the while for every grief,
Each suffering, I craved relief
With individual desire,— 65
Craved all in vain! And felt fierce fire
About a thousand people crawl;
Perished with each,—then mourned for all!
A man was starving in Capri;
He moved his eyes and looked at me; 70
I felt his gaze, I heard his moan,
And knew his hunger as my own.
I saw at sea a great fog-bank
Between two ships that struck and sank;
A thousand screams the heavens smote; 75
And every scream tore through my throat.

No hurt I did not feel, no death
That was not mine; mine each last breath
That, crying, met an answering cry
From the compassion that was I. 80
All suffering mine, and mine its rod;
Mine, pity like the pity of God.
Ah, awful weight! Infinity
Pressed down upon the finite Me!
My anguished spirit, like a bird, 85
Beating against my lips I heard;
Yet lay the weight so close about
There was no room for it without.
And so beneath the weight lay I
And suffered death, but could not die. 90

Long had I lain thus, craving death,
When quietly the earth beneath
Gave way, and inch by inch, so great
At last had grown the crushing weight,
Into the earth I sank till I 95
Full six feet under ground did lie,
And sank no more,—there is no weight
Can follow here, however great.
From off my breast I felt it roll,
And as it went my tortured soul 100
Burst forth and fled in such a gust
That all about me swirled the dust.

Deep in the earth I rested now;
Cool is its hand upon the brow
And soft its breast beneath the head 105
Of one who is so gladly dead.
And all at once, and over all,
The pitying rain began to fall;
I lay and heard each pattering hoof

Upon my lowly, thatched roof, 110
And seemed to love the sound far more
Than ever I had done before.
For rain it hath a friendly sound
To one who's six feet underground;
And scarce the friendly voice or face: 115
A grave is such a quiet place.

The rain, I said, is kind to come
And speak to me in my new home.
I would I were alive again
To kiss the fingers of the rain, 120
To drink into my eyes the shine
Of every slanting silver line,
To catch the freshened, fragrant breeze
From drenched and dripping apple-trees.
For soon the shower will be done, 125
And then the broad face of the sun
Will laugh above the rain-soaked earth
Until the world with answering mirth
Shakes joyously, and each round drop
Rolls, twinkling, from its grass-blade top. 130
How can I bear it; buried here,
While overhead the sky grows clear
And blue again after the storm?
O, multi-colored, multiform,
Beloved beauty over me, 135
That I shall never, never see
Again! Spring-silver, autumn-gold,
That I shall never more behold!
Sleeping your myriad magics through,
Close-sepulchered away from you! 140
O God, I cried, give me new birth,
And put me back upon the earth!
Upset each cloud's gigantic gourd

And let the heavy rain, down-poured
In one big torrent, set me free, 145
Washing my grave away from me!

I ceased; and, through the breathless hush
That answered me, the far-off rush
Of herald wings came whispering
Like music down the vibrant string 150
Of my ascending prayer, and—crash!
Before the wild wind's whistling lash
The startled storm-clouds reared on high
And plunged in terror down the sky,
And the big rain in one black wave 155
Fell from the sky and struck my grave.

I know not how such things can be;
I only know there came to me
A fragrance such as never clings
To aught save happy living things; 160
A sound as of some joyous elf
Singing sweet songs to please himself,
And, through and over everything,
A sense of glad awakening.
The grass, a tip-toe at my ear, 165
Whispering to me I could hear;
I felt the rain's cool finger-tips
Brushed tenderly across my lips,
Laid gently on my sealed sight,
And all at once the heavy night 170
Fell from my eyes and I could see,—
A drenched and dripping apple-tree,
A last long line of silver rain,
A sky grown clear and blue again.
And as I looked a quickening gust 175
Of wind blew up to me and thrust

Into my face a miracle
Of orchard-breath, and with the smell,—
I know not how such things can be!—
I breathed my soul back into me. 180
Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I
And hailed the earth with such a cry
As is not heard save from a man
Who has been dead, and lives again.
About the trees my arms I wound; 185
Like one gone mad I hugged the ground;
I raised my quivering arms on high;
I laughed and laughed into the sky,
Till at my throat a strangling sob
Caught fiercely, and a great heart-throb 190
Sent instant tears into my eyes;
O God, I cried, no dark disguise
Can e'er hereafter hide from me
Thy radiant identity!
Thou canst not move across the grass 195
But my quick eyes will see Thee pass,
Nor speak, however silently,
But my hushed voice will answer Thee.
I know the path that tells Thy way
Through the cool eve of every day; 200
God, I can push the grass apart
And lay my finger on Thy heart!

The world stands out on either side
No wider than the heart is wide;
Above the world is stretched the sky,— 205
No higher than the soul is high.
The heart can push the sea and land
Farther away on either hand;
The soul can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through. 210

But East and West will pinch the heart
That cannot keep them pushed apart;
And he whose soul is flat—the sky
Will cave in on him by and by.

[1912]

Leaves[1]

SARA TEASDALE

One by one, like leaves from a tree,
All my faiths have forsaken me;
But the stars above my head
Burn in white and delicate red,
And beneath my feet the earth 5
Brings the sturdy grass to birth.
I who was content to be
But a silken-singing tree,
But a rustle of delight
In the wistful heart of night— 10
I have lost the leaves that knew
Touch of rain and weight of dew.
Blinded by a leafy crown
I looked neither up nor down—
But the leaves that fall and die 15
Have left me room to see the sky;
Now for the first time I know
Stars above and earth below.

[1915]

[1] From *Rivers to the Sea*, by Sara Teasdale. Copyright, 1915, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

The Spires of Oxford[1]

(*As Seen from the Train*)

WINIFRED M. LETTS

I saw the spires of Oxford
  As I was passing by,
The gray spires of Oxford
  Against a pearl-gray sky.
My heart was with the Oxford men 5
  Who went abroad to die.

The years go fast in Oxford,
  The golden years and gay,
The hoary Colleges look down
  On careless boys at play. 10
But when the bugles sounded war
  They put their games away.

They left the peaceful river,
  The cricket-field, the quad,
The shaven lawns of Oxford 15
  To seek a bloody sod—
They gave their merry youth away
  For country and for God.

God rest you, happy gentlemen,
  Who laid your good lives down, 20
Who took the khaki and the gun
  Instead of cap and gown.
God bring you to a fairer place
  Than even Oxford town.

[1915]

[1] By permission. From *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems*, by Winifred M. Letts. Published by E. P. Dutton & Company.

'I have a Rendezvous with Death'

ALAN SEEGER

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death 5
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath—
It may be I shall pass him still. 10
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep 15
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .
But I've a rendezvous with Death 20
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

[1916]

Grass

CARL SANDBURG

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work:
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg,
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun. 5
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass. 10
Let me work.

[1918]

Earth

JOHN HALL WHEELOCK

Grasshopper, your fairy song
And my poem alike belong
To the dark and silent earth
From which all poetry has birth;
All we say and all we sing 5
Is but as the murmuring
Of that drowsy heart of hers
When from her deep dream she stirs:
If we sorrow, or rejoice,
You and I are but her voice. 10

Deftly does the dust express
In mind her hidden loveliness,
And from her cool silence stream
The cricket's cry and Dante's dream;

For the earth that breeds the trees 15
Breeds cities too, and symphonies.
Equally her beauty flows
Into a savior, or a rose—
Looks down in dream, and from above
Smiles at herself in Jesus' love. 20
Christ's love and Homer's art
Are but the workings of her heart;
Through Leonardo's hand she seeks
Herself, and through Beethoven speaks
In holy thunderings around 25
The awful message of the ground.

The serene and humble mold
Does in herself all selves enfold—
Kingdoms, destinies, and creeds
Great dreams, and dauntless deeds, 30
Science that metes the firmament,
The high, inflexible intent
Of one for many sacrificed—
Plato's brain, the heart of Christ;
All love, all legend, and all lore 35
Are in the dust forevermore.

Even as the growing grass,
Up from the soil religions pass,
And the field that bears the rye
Bears parables and prophecy. 40
Out of the earth the poem grows
Like the lily, or the rose;
And all man is, or yet may be,
Is but herself in agony
Toiling up the steep ascent 45
Toward the complete accomplishment
When all dust shall be, the whole
Universe, one conscious soul.

Yea, the quiet and cool sod
Bears in her breast the dream of God. 50
If you would know what earth is, scan
The intricate, proud heart of man,
Which is the earth articulate,
And learn how holy and how great,
How limitless and how profound 55
Is the nature of the ground—
How without terror or demur
We may entrust ourselves to her
When we are wearied out and lay
Our faces in the common clay. 60

For she is pity, she is love,
All wisdom, she, all thoughts that move
About her everlasting breast
Till she gathers them to rest:
All tenderness of all the ages, 65
Seraphic secrets of the sages,
Vision and hope of all the seers,
All prayer, all anguish, and all tears
Are but the dust that from her dream
Awakes, and knows herself supreme— 70
Are but earth, when she reveals
All that her secret heart conceals
Down in the dark and silent loam,
Which is ourselves, asleep, at home.

Yea, and this, my poem, too, 75
Is part of her as dust and dew,
Wherein herself she doth declare
Through my lips, and say her prayer.
[1919]

Essentials of Verse Structure

In the following pages *verse* means "poetry when considered as a species of literary composition." An elementary knowledge of verse includes the following facts:

Verse is made up of metrical feet. Metrical feet are combined into verses, and verses are, many times, grouped into stanzas.

1. The smallest element in verse structure is the *metrical foot*. It consists of one stressed, or accented, syllable, and one or more unstressed or lightly accented syllables. For example, in the verse (p. 7)

There lived | a wife | at Ush|er's Well

there are four metrical feet. The number of syllables in the separate feet varies, however, and hence the number of syllables in the verse. Thus it becomes clear that the syllable is not a unit by which verse can be measured. The real unit into which verse is divided is the interval of time that elapses between one stressed syllable and the next stressed syllable. This interval of time can be filled by one or more unstressed syllables. It will be seen that this succession of stresses is much like the arrangement of notes in music, where, for instance, a 4/4 measure may be filled with one whole note or with a half-note and other notes, or in many other ways, to fill up the time interval.

2. A *verse*, or line, consists of a certain number of metrical feet.

In regular poetry that is not written in stanzas, the number of metrical feet in a verse is, in general, fairly constant for each poem. In regular stanzaic poetry the number varies with the structure of the stanza. It will be seen, then, that the verse

may also be considered as measured by a certain number of stresses. This does not mean that, in an intelligent reading of the verse, all the stressed syllables are equally stressed. Indeed, in regular five-stressed verse not more than three stresses are usually prominent; and no two stresses are necessarily of the same intensity.

The Metrical Foot

There are four principal kinds of metrical feet in English verse. Of these four kinds, two may be termed feet of rising accent or rising meter. Most English verse is written in rising meters. The metrical feet of rising meter are

1. The *iambus*, a foot of two syllables with the stress upon the second:

al low con vey in trust

Milton's *Paradise Lost* (p. 169) is iambic.

2. The *anapest*, a foot of three syllables with the stress upon the third:

cig a rette in ter pose in ter vene

Browning's "Saul" (p. 288) is anapestic.

Of the four kinds of metrical feet, two may be termed feet of falling accent or falling meter. These are

1. The *trochee*, a foot of two syllables with the stress upon the first:

har bor ma ple pop py

Milton's "L'Allegro" (p. 370) is trochaic, with the lines catalectic (that is, lacking the final unstressed syllable).

2. The *dactyl*, a foot of three syllables with the stress upon the first:

list less ly em bas sy sim i le

Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs" (p. 440) is dactylic, with half of the lines catalectic (lacking the two final unstressed syllables).

Since nearly all English verse is in rising meters, the falling meters give to verse an unusual effect, as we see in such poems as those just mentioned.

All English verse is written in these four meters. A poem is prevailingly either iambic, anapestic, trochaic, or dactylic. Occasionally, however, a different kind of foot from any of the above four will be found substituted for one of the more usual metrical feet. For example,

1. The *spondee*, a foot of two equally stressed syllables (p. 136):

'Cut! Ease | her!' yelled | his mate; | the Daub|er heard.

Spondaic feet usually consist of compound words or of pairs of important monosyllables, and they produce an effect of particular emphasis. Above, the spondee is substituted for an iamb.

2. The *pyrrhic*, which consists of two unaccented syllables:

By his | loved man|sion ry | that the | heaven's breath.

This line, from *Macbeth*, is a striking example of pyrrhic and spondaic feet in the same verse, so placed that the stressed syllables compensate for the unstressed syllables. It is evident that these two kinds of feet are exceptions, since verse could not be written in either spondees or pyrrhics alone.

Two other kinds of metrical feet are occasionally found:

1. The *amphibrach*, which consists of three syllables of which the second one is stressed:

un kind ly re ceiv ing

2. The *amphimacer*, or *cretic*, which consists of two stressed syllables with an unstressed syllable between them:

con tra dict

These two kinds of metrical feet are especially rare, and may often be accounted for by some other method of scanning the verse that will explain equally well the peculiar arrangement of

the stressed and unstressed syllables. When used throughout a poem, they are deliberately experimental.

A brief examination of the meter of most poems of moderate length, especially those expressing lively and varied emotions, will show that poetry is not written in uniformly regular meters, but that there is a constant variation of stresses from their standard position; or, in other words, a constant variation in the number and position of unstressed syllables between stressed syllables. This variation is not an abnormality but is an essential of good verse. Poetry of perfectly regular meters becomes insufferably monotonous and unnatural. When meters are regular, or nearly so, as in Southey's "The Battle of Blenheim" (p. 322), it is usually for some special purpose, as, for example, to give the effect of extreme simplicity. As poetry rises in imagination, the meter tends to become more irregular.

Variations in Metrical Feet

It is generally, but not in every case, an easy matter to determine the standard foot in a given poem. But, with the standard meter for a poem once determined, variations can be accounted for. Keeping in mind the fact that it is the number of stressed syllables in a verse that sets its standard, and also bearing in mind the analogy between poetry and music in measures and metrical feet, we see how feet of rising accent may readily be substituted for each other, and how feet of falling accent can likewise be interchanged. That is,

1. Anapests are often substituted for iambs, and iambs for anapests; in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (p. 16), a poem prevailingly iambic, we find

And he stop|peth one | of three.

In "The Burial of Sir John Moore" (p. 43) we find iambic feet frequently substituted for anapests:

Not a drum | was heard, | not a fu|neral note,

2. Dactyls are substituted for trochees, and trochees for dactyls. In Scott's "Hunting Song" (p. 205) we find

Merrily, | merrily, | mingle | they ∧ ∧ .

In Tennyson's "Sweet and Low" (p. 213), which is predominantly dactylic, we have

While my | little one, | while my | pretty one | sleeps ∧ ∧ .

Again, spondees and pyrrhics may be substituted for the prevailing metrical feet in any kind of meter.

Finally, metrical feet of falling meter may be substituted for metrical feet of rising meter having the same number of syllables. That is,

1. Trochees may be substituted for iambs, and iambs for trochees. Thus, in "Lucy Gray" (p. 39), prevailingly iambic:

You to | the town | must go.

From "To a Skylark" (p. 434), prevailingly trochaic:

The blue | deep thou | wingest.

The substitution of a trochee for an iamb is very frequent, especially at the beginning of a verse, or after a medial pause in the verse, and is sometimes called *inversion*. The substitution of an iamb for a trochee is rare.

2. In anapestic and dactylic measures there is likely to be a frequent, at least an apparent, substitution of one kind of metrical foot for another, especially a substitution of dactyls for anapests. For example, in "The Marshes of Glynn" (p. 402), one verse may be dactylic and the next anapestic throughout:

Sinuous | southward and | sinuous | northward the | shimmering | band ∧ ∧

Of the sand-|beach fas|tens the fringe | of the marsh | to the folds| of the land.

Essentials of Verse Structure

Omission of Syllables

The omission of lightly stressed syllables at the beginning of the verse is called *truncation*. From "Saul" (p. 288), prevailingly anapestic:

Till lo, | thou art grown | to a mon|arch; a peo|ple is thine.

The omission of light syllables at the end of the verse is termed *catalexis*. From "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace Bled" (p. 201), trochaic:

Welcome | to your | gory | bed ∧.

Catalexis is very common in verses ending in light syllables, and, indeed, becomes almost the rule in some dactylic and trochaic verse.

Addition of Syllables

The addition of extra syllables at the beginning of a verse is called *anacrusis*. From "The Bridge of Sighs" (p. 440), two-stressed dactylic, with catalexis:

Her | e vil be|hav ior ∧.

The addition of extra syllables at the end of the verse produces a *weak*, or *feminine*, ending. From "Lord Ullin's Daughter" (p. 41), iambic:

Cries, 'Boat|man, do | not tar|ry!'

From "The Forsaken Merman" (p. 293), anapestic:

She will start | from her slum|ber.

The Verse

The unit of verse structure next larger than the foot is the *verse*. It may consist of any number of metrical feet from two to eight. Verses of seven or of eight feet are difficult to maintain, since those of seven feet tend to divide into two verses of four and three feet, respectively, and those of eight feet tend to divide into two verses of four feet each.

Verse is best described by a phrase combining the number of stresses with the name of the standard foot of the poem, as, for example, two-stressed or three-stressed iambic (trochaic etc.) verse. Some writers prefer to describe the different kinds of verse by words that combine the names of the feet with the Greek numerals. For example, *iambic pentameter* indicates five-stressed iambic verse; *trochaic tetrameter*, four-stressed trochaic verse; etc.

We have already noticed that the stresses in a verse are not of equal prominence; it is also true that the chief stresses will tend to shift from one part of the verse to another, and not be found in corresponding places in a succession of verses.

The Cæsura

A verse of more than three stresses is nearly always divided into parts by at least one pause more or less emphatic, sometimes marked by a point of punctuation, sometimes not. If there is more than one pause in the verse, one of these will be the more emphatic. The longer pause is called the *cæsura*. It may occur anywhere in the verse, between feet or within them. The cæsura is constantly shifting its position in successive verses, and this shifting adds to the variety and emphasis of the verse. It may again be observed here that variation from a set standard in both the foot and the verse is one of the higher laws of poetry, and is, for the sake of æsthetic values in poetry, secondary only to the standard itself.

Special Kinds of Verse

Two kinds of verse, because of their frequent use and the high value of the poetry to be found in these forms, deserve especial mention. These are

1. *Blank verse*, or five-stressed iambic verse without rime.

Blank verse is the usual form of the poetic drama, and of long, dignified narratives. It is associated with the most important names in the history of English poetry, as, for example, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning.

Blank verse, especially dramatic blank verse, sometimes carries an extra syllable at the end, or more rarely at the beginning, usually in the more impassioned or imaginative passages. It may also be lacking in syllables, especially when the sense is weighty and the speech is more than ordinarily deliberate.

2. *The heroic couplet*, a succession of five-stressed iambic verses which rime in couplets. The term *closed couplet* should properly be used to refer to the kind of heroic couplet in which the sense comes to a more or less complete close with the last word of the couplet.

In blank verse, and also in the heroic couplet, the matter of grammatical completeness and its relation to verse structure is of importance. Verse may be "end-stopped"; that is, the end of the verse may coincide with the end of the sentence, or with the end of some grammatical unit of the sentence,—a phrase or clause; or it may be "run on," the grammatical unit running over into the next verse. In blank verse a succession of either end-stopped or run-on verses becomes monotonous; and blank verse so read that the ear of the listener is unable to discern where the lines end is ill-read.

In the heroic couplet the matter of end-stopped or run-on lines greatly affects the character of the verse. As used by Chaucer, and also by later writers, the sense tends to overflow the couplet in frequent run-on lines and heavy cæsuras, the sentence frequently ending within a following verse. Keats's

heroic couplet is extreme in this direction: the ends of sentences come so often in the midst of verses, and the ends of the couplets are so unimportant in emphasis, that the couplet nature of the verse tends to become lost to the ear.

In the eighteenth century the heroic couplet was brought to extreme perfection in the matter of completeness, and was thus made especially effective in satire. For satirical or didactic effect the second verse of the couplet is of especial importance; for it should bring the force of the sentence to a strong and speedy close, and the rime word should be unexpected or unexpectedly applied.

When the heroic couplet is so planned that the emotional values of the verse are intended to overbalance the intellectual values, the couplet form should not be so insistent by means of end-stopped verses as to pound upon the ear, nor, on the other hand, should it be so obscured that the value of the rime is lost. For pleasing effects in the heroic couplet, few poets have been able to exceed Chaucer.

Rime

Rime consists in the similarity of sound in word endings. Perfect rime consists in the identity of sound in the last stressed vowel in the riming words, together with the identity of all sounds, if any, that follow these vowels. The sounds that precede the two riming vowels must be different in each of the riming words.

Rimes may be

1. *Single:* see, flee; leave, receive; constitute, jute.
2. *Double*, or *feminine*: receiving, believing.
3. *Triple:* tenderly, slenderly; Bostonian, Devonian.

Double and triple rimes tend to enliven the verse, and are often used for humorous or satirical effects.

Much latitude in rime is found in the verse of skilled poets, even in serious matter. Two pages of *In Memoriam* yield the

following: lost, lost; Christ, mist; font, wont; boughs, house (*n.*); Christ, Evangelist; gaze, face; theirs, prayers; good, blood; this, is; put, shut; moods, woods.

In the matter of rime something depends upon the poet's habits of pronunciation. Some writers would rime "fruit" with "loot," but not with "jute"; and would rime "true" with "do," but not with "few." A study of rime often reveals very interestingly the changes that have taken place in the pronunciation of words within three or four centuries.

The purpose of rime is to add richness to verse. Trite and hackneyed rimes—love, dove; pin, sin; be, see—detract from the richness of verse values; and any straining of the verse for the sake of making it rime, except for humorous or satirical effects, is a blemish. *Hudibras* and Byron's satires furnish examples of the use of rime for grotesque or humorous climaxes.

The Stanza

The *stanza* is a group of verses forming a stage in the thought of the poem, corresponding roughly to a paragraph in prose. It is usual for all stanzas of a poem to consist of the same number of verses, with rimes (if there be rimes) and with different kinds of verses (if there be different kinds) following each other in the same order.

The simplest kind of stanza is the *ballad quatrain*, or stanza of alternately four and three iambic feet, with the second and the fourth verse riming. Historically this is probably the ancient *septenary*, or seven-foot iambic couplet, which has come to be divided at the end of the fourth foot.

The number of stanza forms in English verse is almost countless, although the number of serviceable and much-used forms is comparatively small. The use of one stanza form or another for a given poem is, however, of much importance, and adds its effect, sometimes subtly and sometimes obviously, to the total

results of the metrical composition. Professor Connor cites, as an example, *In Memoriam*, XXVII (p. 365):

> I hold it true, whate'er befall;
> I feel it, when I sorrow most;
> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.

If, in this well-known stanza, the first and second verses change places, there is no change whatever in the sense of the stanza. But one cannot imagine a long, serious poem wholly successful if it should display such a rapid-fire "snip-snap" of rime as this change would cause. The form that Tennyson chose makes possible continuous dignity as well as simplicity.

Among stanzaic forms, one or two are noteworthy because of their beauty and usefulness.

The Spenserian Stanza

The stanza used by Edmund Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* has continued in English verse. It is rimed *ababbcbcc*. It is five-stressed iambic except for the last verse, which has six stresses and which constitutes what is called an *Alexandrine*. This stanza is especially suitable for rather leisurely narrative or for embellished description. Keats used it in "The Eve of St. Agnes" and Byron in *Childe Harold*. The body of the stanza is bound together by its few and frequently recurring rimes, and the Alexandrine at the close subtly joins stanzas in stately and buoyant unity.

The Rime Royal

The *rime royal* was possibly so named because James I of Scotland used it in his *King's Quair*. It had previously been used extensively by Chaucer, was later employed by Shakespeare, and has been used more recently by William Morris. It

is typical of a genus of stanzaic forms less complex than the Spenserian stanza, and yet rich enough and flexible enough for excellent achievement in verse effects. Its rime scheme is *ababbcc*, and its verse is five-stressed iambic.

Standing between the nine-verse Spenserian stanza and the seven-verse rime royal are the eight-verse lyric and narrative stanzas of many forms. It will be noticed that their effect is to give unity and compactness to composition in verse, together with opportunity and space for emotional expression.

More Complex Forms

The sonnet, the strophes of the Pindaric ode, and some of the artificial forms may be considered as stanzas of highly complex form, or as poems of one or more stanzas. In the present volume they are treated under their respective headings as poems of fixed type.

Biographical Index

"Æ." *See* RUSSELL, GEORGE WILLIAM.

ARNOLD, MATTHEW, essayist, critic, and educator, born at Laleham, 1822; died at Liverpool, 1888. His university education was at Oxford, where he became a fellow of Oriel; he was Inspector of Schools from 1851 to 1886, and was professor of poetry at Oxford from 1857 to 1867. He was the foremost literary critic of his generation, fundamental in his standards of art and of morals, a stimulating force in literature and society. His poems, written in the mid-century, show his characteristic questioning attitude of mind and are conspicuous for the fineness of their workmanship and for their subdued yet persistent strain of melancholy. His most pronounced poetical success was in elegy.

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BINYON, LAURENCE, art critic, deputy keeper in the British Museum, born in Lancaster, 1869; died in 1943. He was the son of an Anglican clergyman, was educated at St. Paul's School and at Oxford, and published several volumes of poems and several dramas.

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'O World, be nobler'	218

BLAKE, WILLIAM, engraver and artist, born in London, 1757; died there in 1827. His education was gained chiefly at a drawing school, as an engraver's apprentice, and at the school of the Royal Academy. His early and best-known poems are characterized by their originality and by simple directness of expression. Their childlikeness of attitude is combined with a pronounced spiritual and mystic element of emotion. This increased as Blake grew older. The same qualities maintained in his poems are found in his numerous book illustrations, and in his wider artistic work.

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BOURDILLON, FRANCIS WILLIAM, private teacher, son of an Anglican clergyman and author, born at Woolbeding, 1852; died 1921. He was educated at Oxford. His poetry is chiefly lyrical.

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'The night has a thousand eyes' 216

BRIDGES, ROBERT, physician, critic, and poet laureate of England, born 1844, died 1930; educated at Eton and Oxford. He was the author of some metrical criticism, of several volumes of lyrical verse, and of several dramas. His poem "The Testament of Beauty" contains his most original work.

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'When first we met' 247

BRONTË, EMILY, novelist, the daughter of an Anglican clergyman and sister of Charlotte and Anne Brontë, novelists; born in Yorkshire, 1818; died there, 1848. The story of the life of the three is a tale of heroic struggle against adverse circumstances, disease, and death. A note of indomitable courage is characteristic of her poetry.

PAGE
The Old Stoic 444

BROOKE, RUPERT, son of a master at Rugby School; born 1887; died in the British military service at Skyros, Greece, 1915. Although he had scarcely discovered his method and his theme in poetry, the virility of his outlook upon life shows that his death was one of the major losses that British poetry suffered through the World War.

PAGE
The Soldier 239

BROWNE, WILLIAM, born at Tavistock, 1591; probably died there about 1643. He was for a time at Oxford, and was later of the Inner Temple. He was known in his day chiefly as the author of *Britannia's Pastorals.*

PAGE
On the Countess Dowager of Pembroke: 'Underneath this sable herse' 424

BROWNING, ELIZABETH BARRETT, born at Durham, in 1806; died at Florence, in 1861. She was married to Robert Browning in London in 1846 and spent the remainder of her life in Italy. She became

famous as a poet before her husband, for her work appealed with especial sympathy to the people of her own times.

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From *Sonnets from the Portuguese*:

XIV. 'If thou must love me' 234

BROWNING, ROBERT, born at Camberwell, London, 1812; died at Venice, 1889. He had no regular scholastic training, but studied with private tutors and read extensively in the library of his father, a man of fine literary taste. His eager zest for the fullness of life in all its experiences is seen in his poems depicting critical moments in the lives of men and women. This accounts for his frequent use of the dramatic lyric, a mode in which he reached the most conspicuous success among the many poets who used it during the nineteenth century. His abundant optimism is also characteristic of his century.

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Memorabilia 444
My Last Duchess 282
Parting at Morning 392
Saul 288
The Bishop Orders his Tomb 284

BRYANT, WILLIAM CULLEN, translator, journalist, and publicist, born at Cummington, Massachusetts, 1794; died in New York City, 1878. His father, a country physician, was a man of literary taste. His formal education was limited to his father's tutoring, the public schools, and a few months at Williams College. He perfected himself in the classics and translated Homer into blank verse. His youthful success in "Thanatopsis" was never excelled in his verse though he continued in active literary work for more than sixty years thereafter. The high quality of his verse set a standard for American poetry of his generation.

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To a Waterfowl 433

BUCHANAN, ROBERT WILLIAMS, novelist, dramatist, and journalist, born in Staffordshire, 1841; died at Streatham, 1901. He was educated at the University of Glasgow, spent most of his life in literary work in London, and was conspicuous for the intensity of his literary convictions. A vein of mysticism is found in many of his poems.

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The Ballad of Judas Iscariot 54

BUNNER, HENRY CUYLER, journalist and writer of fiction, born in Oswego, New York, 1855; died in New Jersey, 1896. It was as editor of *Puck* that he found the best field for his humor, which was mingled with a sense of social responsibility. Several collections of short stories, and verse usually characterized by delicate vivacity, constitute most of his other work.

PAGE
'A pitcher of mignonette' 247

BURNS, ROBERT, born near Ayr, Scotland, 1759; died at Dumfries, 1796. His father was a peasant farmer, and he himself, though he was given what small advantages of schooling his parents could afford, was brought up to a life of toil. His poetry, written primarily for men and women of his own station in life, shows Scotch manners, morals, and ideals at their best and their worst.

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'Green grow the rashes, O' 203
'John Anderson my jo, John' 199
'O, wert thou in the cauld blast' 204
'Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled' 201
Tam o' Shanter 74
The Banks o' Doon 200
To a Mountain Daisy 427

BYRON, GEORGE GORDON (LORD), born in London, 1788; died at Missolonghi, Greece, 1824. He came into his title at the age of ten, was educated at Cambridge, and soon after turned his attention to literature. After 1816 he lived entirely upon the Continent, where he gained a reputation for being the chief spirit of his generation in English poetry. The fascination of his personality and the power of passages in his poetry, indeed, placed him almost alone in his day. Social satire and iconoclasm, and his sympathy with certain phases of the revolution going on among many nations of the earth, also characterize his poetry. These qualities make still more conspicuous his death in the war for Greek independence.

PAGE
'She walks in beauty' 208
The Prisoner of Chillon 106

CAMPBELL, THOMAS, born at Glasgow, 1777; died at Boulogne, 1844. He had a wide personal acquaintance and was one of the most

popular poets of his day, largely owing to his success in several patriotic lyrics. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

PAGE
Lord Ullin's Daughter 41

CAMPION, THOMAS, a musician, physician, and writer of songs, born in London, 1567; died there, 1619. He was probably educated upon the Continent, devoted himself to the classics, and advocated classic measures in English poetry. Many songs, with music, and several masques are among his poetical works.

PAGE
Cherry-Ripe 329

CARMAN, (WILLIAM) BLISS, born at Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1861; lived in Connecticut; died there, 1929. He studied at the universities of New Brunswick, Edinburgh, and Harvard. Some of his work was in journalism and in the essay, but his verse was more significant. In this he collaborated chiefly with Richard Hovey. In their gay buoyancy and unconventionality his poems strike a note congenial to a mood in all of us.

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A Vagabond Song 407

CARRUTH, WILLIAM HERBERT, teacher and editor, born at Osawatomie, Kansas, in 1859; died at Stanford University, California, in 1924. His verse pleasingly combines the more conservative in form and thought with the more liberal.

PAGE
Each in His Own Tongue 462

CHAUCER, GEOFFREY, "the morning star of song," born in London, about 1340; died there, 1400. He had his schooling in the world of men and affairs, at court, and upon diplomatic and military missions. He is full of medieval lore, but his enthusiastic love of human nature makes him depict the men and women of his own day in such living characters that he seems less a man of medieval times than a modern delighting to make us acquainted with his companions of a previous incarnation. Moreover, he is one of the most entertaining and wisest humorists in the English tongue.

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The Pardoner's Tale 65

COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR, philosopher, lecturer, critic, publicist, the son of a clergyman and schoolmaster; born in Devon, in

1772; died at Highgate, in 1834. He was for three years at Cambridge, and was engaged in ministering to Unitarian congregations, in journalism, in criticism, and in philosophical writing. Influenced by Wordsworth he produced his most characteristic verse, in the borderland of the romantic and the occult. In genius of the imagination which makes the unreal real, his poetry has never been equaled. No man of his age surpassed him in capacity and variety of understanding.

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Kubla Khan 378
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 16

Collins, William, born at Chichester, 1721; died there, 1759. His education was at Winchester College and at Oxford. He was of so sensitive a nervous organization that he went insane and spent the last years of his life in retirement. Though few in number, his poems are of unusual perfection, and in the ode he has reached a place not surpassed in the language.

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Ode to Evening 261

Cowper, William, translator and hymn-writer, son of an Anglican clergyman; born in Hertfordshire, 1731; died at East Dereham, 1800. After studying at Westminster School, he was preparing for the law, a profession in which his family was conspicuous, when ill health leading to spells of insanity drove him into country retirement. His poetical work ranged from a translation of Homer to humorous verse, and is characterized by a genuine care for rural scenes uncommon in his day and by a didacticism which made him one of the most popular poets of his time.

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To Mary Unwin: 'Mary! I want a lyre' 229

Cunningham, Allan, a Scotch miscellaneous writer, born in Dumfriesshire, 1784; died 1842. His literary work was mostly in prose, but some of his songs are highly successful.

PAGE
'A wet sheet and a flowing sea' 209

Daniel, Samuel, historical and miscellaneous writer, born near Taunton, 1562; died in Wiltshire, 1619. After three years at Oxford he devoted himself to literature, becoming poet laureate and master

of the queen's revels. He produced many dramatic pastorals and masques and was especially successful in the sonnet.

From *To Delia*: PAGE
LIV. 'Care-charmer Sleep' 223

DAVENANT, (SIR) WILLIAM, dramatist, theatrical manager, born at Oxford, in 1606, the son of an innkeeper who afterward became mayor; died in London, 1668. He is said to have been befriended by Milton during the Commonwealth, and in turn to have saved the aged poet from imprisonment and possible death at the Restoration.

PAGE
'The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest' 198

DICKINSON, EMILY, born in Amherst, Massachusetts, 1830; died there, 1886. Her life was spent in the seclusion of a New England home of fine traditions and culture. Her poems, experimental and tentative, only three or four of which were published during her lifetime, are distinguished by their epigrammatic penetration, their delicacy, their naïve whimsicality, and at the same time their intense emotion.

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'Alter? When the hills do' 217
'I asked no other thing' 456
Indian Summer 406

DOBSON, AUSTIN, born at Plymouth, 1840; died at Ealing, 1921. From some inclination toward art his taste turned to literature, especially that of the eighteenth century. The brilliancy of his poetry may perhaps be attributed to his sympathetic understanding of that age of courtly grace in literature.

PAGE
A Kiss 247
'In after days' 244

DONNE, JOHN, clergyman and court preacher, born in London, 1573; died there in 1631. He studied at Oxford, took orders in mature life after years of poverty, and became one of the most celebrated preachers of his day. His poetry, though eccentric, and in many cases showing the worst faults of the "metaphysical" school, has a fervidness of expression that gives it an honored place in the literature of the early seventeenth century.

PAGE
'Death, be not proud' 227
Song: 'Go and catch a falling star' 314

DRAYTON, MICHAEL, born in Warwickshire, 1563; died in London, 1631. He spent his life in the toilsome production of long historical, narrative, and miscellaneous poems, but some of his shorter pieces equal in spirit the high level of poetry of his time.

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From *Idea*: LXI. 'Since there's no help' 227

DRYDEN, JOHN, dramatist, critic, satirist, poet laureate, born in Northamptonshire, 1631; died in London, 1700. After studying at Cambridge, he toiled forward through every phase of a literary man's life in London—poverty, clique, rivalry, and intrigue—to the place of foremost man of letters of the Restoration. In his own day he was considered chiefly a dramatist. More significant today is his work in verse, in which he established the mode of the neoclassic school. His genius in satire has not been surpassed.

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Alexander's Feast 255
Mac Flecknoe 315

EMERSON, RALPH WALDO, clergyman, lecturer, and essayist, born in Boston, 1803; died at Concord, Massachusetts, 1882. The son of a New England clergyman, educated at Harvard, and entering the ministry, Emerson carried on the traditions of his family for scholarship and service. In his own day his influence through his personality and his lectures in stimulating moral and intellectual activity can hardly be overestimated. Essays, lectures, and addresses form the greater part of his work. His poetry, more noteworthy for epigram, originality, and seriousness than for ease of form, sometimes attains a simple directness unsurpassed in American verse.

PAGE

Days 445

FRENEAU, PHILIP, journalist, born in New York City, 1752; died in New Jersey, 1832. He was graduated from Princeton, and was engaged for some years in commerce, but spent the greater part of his life in newspaper work. Though generally bound by the literary mannerisms of his century, he is often genuinely American in theme. In his simple, direct view of nature he anticipates the English romanticists by a number of years.

PAGE

The Wild Honeysuckle 377

Biographical Index

FROST, ROBERT, born at San Francisco, 1875; now living in Vermont. He was educated at Dartmouth and at Harvard, and has been a teacher and lecturer in American colleges and universities. More than any other poet he has caught the spirit of rural New England of today,—of a society in decline yet retaining a stubborn though unconscious hold upon the spirit of its past.

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Birches 408

The Death of the Hired Man 156

GAY, JOHN, satirist and dramatist, born at Barnstaple, 1685; died in 1732. He followed the varying fortunes of the patron-seeking poet until the success of *The Beggar's Opera* brought him recognition and fortune. His success lay in the opportuneness of his satire, some of which is of the quality that lasts. A noteworthy revival of interest in his satirical dramas is now taking place.

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The Hare and Many Friends 320

Thursday: From *The Shepherd's Week* 343

GIBSON, WILFRID WILSON, born at Hexham, 1878; now living in England. His poetry often concerns itself with the tragedy, sometimes with the sentiment, of common folk as the victims of industrialism.

PAGE

The Ovens 147

GILBERT, (SIR) WILLIAM SCHWENCK, dramatist, born in London, 1836; died at Harrow, 1911. His work was mostly in humorous poetry and in the comic opera, in which for twenty years he successfully collaborated with Sir Arthur Sullivan, the musician. His verse excels in ludicrous and sometimes satirical paradox.

PAGE

Etiquette 324

GILDER, RICHARD WATSON, journalist and editor, born at Bordentown, New Jersey, 1844; died 1909. He was the son of a clergyman, was engaged in journalism for a few years, and was then assistant editor and editor of the *Century Magazine* for the greater part of his active life. Seriousness and delicacy of thought characterize his poems.

PAGE

The Sonnet 237

GRAY, THOMAS, born in London, 1716; died at Cambridge, 1771. He was graduated from Cambridge, and after a few years of travel and private study returned there to spend the remainder of his days. His whole life was that of a retiring scholar whose tastes in literature, music, art, landscape, architecture, and botany were all-absorbing. He became professor of history and modern languages at Cambridge, and had the reputation of being one of the most learned men of Europe. His poetry, a good deal affected by melancholy, which was far from being a constant mood, is small in volume, but of perfect and almost fastidious workmanship.

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Elegy written in a Country Churchyard 356

HARTE, FRANCIS BRET, novelist and short-story writer, son of a teacher of classical literature; born at Albany, New York, 1839; died in England, 1902. In his boyhood he went with his widowed mother to California, where he became a miner, teacher, express messenger, printer, and editor, and at length professor of English at the University of California. His eminent success was as a writer of short stories depicting California in its pioneer days. His poetry, often of like inspiration, is secondary to his prose.

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What the Bullet Sang 297

HENLEY, WILLIAM ERNEST, editor, critic, and dramatist, born in Gloucester, 1849; died in London, 1903. For most of his life he was a contributor to and editor of magazines of art and literature. His verse, often based on the hard experiences of a tempestuous life, is of marked individuality and strength, although written during a time when poetry was often timid and unreal.

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Ballade of Dead Actors 243
'Out of the night' 455
Villanelle 248

HERBERT, GEORGE, Anglican clergyman, theologian, and hymn-writer, born at Montgomery Castle, 1593; died at Bemerton, 1663. He was of aristocratic birth, and was educated at Cambridge, where he became a tutor and university orator. In an age of formalism he led a life of almost monastic piety, of intense devotion to the Church, and of loving service to his flock. His poetry, although sometimes

marred by puns and conceits, is of fervid personal faith, often expressing itself in quaint symbolism.

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Love 423

HERRICK, ROBERT, Anglican clergyman, born in London, 1591; died in Devonshire, 1674. After taking a degree at Cambridge and leading for a while, in all probability, a rather worldly life, he was presented with a living in Devon, which he occupied, except during the Commonwealth, until his death. He was one of the "sons" of Ben Jonson, "pagan" in his poetry at least, and thoroughly in love with the country and the homely simplicity of its people. He wrote hundreds of brief poems unequaled in their time for wit, delicacy, sprightliness, and whimsicality, carrying about them the charm of irresponsible youth mingled at times with regret that youth must pass.

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To Electra 334
To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time 333

HOLMES, OLIVER WENDELL, physician, scientist, novelist, essayist, son of a clergyman; born at Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1809; died in Boston, 1894. He was educated at Harvard and various European medical institutions, and was professor of anatomy at Dartmouth and at Harvard. From his college days he contributed verse and essays to magazines, notably the *Atlantic Monthly*. The scope of his verse includes humor, satire, occasional pieces, and hymns. Most characteristic are those pieces that mingle the pathetic, the humorous, and the serious.

PAGE
The Last Leaf 336

HOOD, THOMAS, editor and humorist, born in London, 1799; died there, 1845. He contributed to and edited literary periodicals and established a magazine of his own. His popular appeal was not alone in humor, for "The Song of the Shirt" and "The Bridge of Sighs" remain his best-known poems.

PAGE
I'm Not a Single Man 338
The Bridge of Sighs 440

HOVEY, RICHARD, journalist and dramatist, born at Normal, Illinois, 1864; died in New York City, 1900. He was graduated from Dartmouth. In his most serious poetry his interests lay in Arthurian legend. His better-known poems were written in collaboration with Bliss Carman in *Songs from Vagabondia.*

PAGE
The Sea Gypsy 217

HOWARD, HENRY (EARL OF SURREY), born in 1517 or 1518; executed for treason in London, 1547. He was born in high rank, son of the duke of Norfolk, and, in an age of intrigue, led the dangerous life of a courtier too near the throne. He was associated with Sir Thomas Wyatt in the revival of English poetry and the introduction of the sonnet into English verse.

PAGE
Description of Spring 221

HUNT, JAMES HENRY LEIGH, journalist, critic, essayist, dramatist, born in Middlesex, 1784; died at Putney, 1859. He was among the outstanding liberals of his day in society and politics, and was imprisoned for two years for an article criticizing the Prince Regent. He bore the brunt of the attack by reviewers upon the "cockney" school of poets. Unconventionality, spontaneity, grace, and delicacy characterize his poetry.

PAGE
Rondeau: 'Jenny kissed me' 338

JONSON, BEN, poet laureate, critic, dramatist, born at Westminster about 1573; died in London, 1637. After some years of desultory adventure Jonson began his career of writing for the stage, which he continued through life. He is generally regarded as second only to Shakespeare among English dramatists. He followed the ancient classic rather than the romantic school of drama, and he is the leading exponent of the neoclassic school of his day.

PAGE
A Pindaric Ode 250
Simplex Munditiis 330
To Celia: 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' 196

KEATS, JOHN, born in London, 1795; died at Rome, 1821. He was of humble birth and had only ordinary advantages in education. His eagerness for literature led him into profitable reading and into poetry. Only four years passed between his first appearance in poetry

and his last, but no other English poet in such brief time ever made such strides toward perfection. Among the early nineteenth-century English romanticists he stands for the utmost in richness of color, sensuous appeal, and the complete expression of beauty.

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'Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art' 233
La Belle Dame sans Merci 45
Ode on a Grecian Urn 272
Ode to a Nightingale 270
On First Looking into Chapman's Homer 232
The Eve of St. Agnes 118
To Autumn 382
'When I have fears that I may cease to be' 233

KILMER, JOYCE, born at New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1886; killed in action in France, 1918. He was educated at Rutgers College and Columbia, and published three small volumes of verse.

PAGE
Trees 407

KINGSLEY, CHARLES, Anglican clergyman and novelist, born in Devonshire, in 1819; died at Eversley, in 1875. He was educated at Cambridge, and is best known, probably, for his novels *Westward Ho!* and *Hypatia.* His poetry is of limited extent.

PAGE
The Three Fishers 51

KIPLING, RUDYARD, novelist and writer of short stories, born at Bombay, 1865; died in England, 1936. He was one of the most vigorous writers of fiction of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. His first stories, written and published in India, are of the frontier type and full of local color. His more recent work in poetry and prose reflects the idea of British imperialism.

PAGE
Recessional 465

LANDOR, WALTER SAVAGE, scholar, essayist, and critic, born at Warwick, 1775; died at Florence, 1864. His youth and young manhood were erratic, and his domestic relationships were unfortunate. Most of his life was spent in Florence. Here he produced his *Imaginary Conversations*, for which he is best known. His strong bent toward the classics and his complete familiarity with them gave his choicest poetry, romantic though it is in spirit, a compression, re-

serve, and finish that are classical in effect. Landor is one of the greatest stylists of the century.

PAGE
On his Seventy-fifth Birthday 433
Rose Aylmer 432

LANIER, SIDNEY, musician and lecturer upon English literature, born at Macon, Georgia, 1842; died at Lynn, North Carolina, 1881. After graduating and teaching at Oglethorpe College he entered the Confederate service. He was captured while blockade-running, and while prisoner of war his health, never robust, broke down; the rest of his life was a fight against disease. With the one exception of Poe, he is the foremost poet of the South. His nature lyrics, reverent in spirit, are his finest poems.

PAGE
The Marshes of Glynn 402

LETTS, WINIFRED M. (MRS. W. H. FOSTER VERSCHOYLE), novelist and writer for children, born in Ireland, 1887; now living there. Her poetry concerns itself chiefly with the life of the peasantry.

PAGE
The Spires of Oxford 477

LINDSAY, NICHOLAS VACHEL, born at Springfield, Illinois, 1879; died there, 1931. He was educated at Hiram College in Ohio, for a while studied art, and then turned to literature. He had a strong sense for the appeal of poetry through the ear, and many of his poems were composed for reading aloud.

PAGE
The Chinese Nightingale 410

LONGFELLOW, HENRY WADSWORTH, educator and translator, born at Portland, Maine, 1807; died at Cambridge, 1882. He was educated at Bowdoin College, studied and traveled abroad extensively, and became professor of modern languages at Bowdoin and later at Harvard. His contributions to American periodicals, his activity as a teacher, and his translation of Dante served to make him the most eminent representative of American culture of his day. His verse, though never daring, is finished with a high consciousness of artistic values.

From *Divina Commedia*: PAGE
I. 'Oft have I seen' 235

Biographical Index

LOVELACE, RICHARD, soldier and courtier, born at Woolwich, 1618; died in London, 1658. He had some education at Oxford, served on the Royalist side during the Civil War, and was twice in prison. His verse is not large in amount, but a few of his lyrics are among the choice literary fragments resulting from the struggle of Puritan and Cavalier.

PAGE

To Althea, from Prison 197

To Lucasta, Going to the Wars 197

MCCRAE, JOHN, physician and scientist, born near Guelph, Canada, 1872; died at Wimereux, France, a member of the Canadian forces, 1918. He was educated at Toronto University and at medical institutions in the United States. Some of his lyrics were written at advanced dressing stations in the Belgian trenches.

PAGE

'In Flanders fields' 244

MARKHAM, EDWIN, educator, publicist, born in Oregon, 1852; died at Port Richmond, Staten Island, 1940. He received his education at Western colleges, and has been principal and superintendent of high schools in California. He has been active in promoting child-labor legislation, and his poetry carries a strong note of democracy as its most characteristic quality.

PAGE

The Man with the Hoe 466

MARLOWE, CHRISTOPHER, dramatist, born at Canterbury, 1564; stabbed to death in a tavern at Deptford, 1593. He is even more remarkable for his influence than for his own achievement; his influence on blank verse and on poetic tragedy was very great. He was the principal predecessor of Shakespeare.

PAGE

The Passionate Shepherd to his Love 342

MASEFIELD, JOHN, poet laureate of England, born in Hertfordshire, 1875; now living in England. Love of adventure led him early to sea, and for several years he lived the life of a wanderer, gathering into his experiences the materials used so effectively in his narrative poems. His realism and his virility, which include also much of idealism, have placed him among the first of living British poets.

PAGE

From *Dauber* 131

Sea Fever 219

Tewkesbury Road 418

MASTERS, EDGAR LEE, born at Garnett, Kansas, 1869; now living in New York. He is a graduate of Knox College. His most notable work is the satirical *Spoon River Anthology,* unique in plan and successfully executed.

From *Spoon River Anthology*:

PAGE
Anne Rutledge 298
Benjamin Pantier 299
Lucinda Matlock 299
Mrs. Benjamin Pantier 300

MEREDITH, GEORGE, novelist, born at Portsmouth, 1828; died, 1909. After schooling in England and in Germany he settled down to a long and toilsome career in journalism and literature in London. He had comparatively few friends, and his best work, which he produced in middle life, was for a long time unnoticed. Both his poetry and his prose are noteworthy for their analysis of situation and character.

PAGE
Lucifer in Starlight 237

MIFFLIN, LLOYD, portrait-painter, born at Columbia, Pennsylvania, 1846; died there, 1921. He studied art in Europe, and published several volumes of sonnets. His mastery of the sonnet form is exceptional in American poetry.

PAGE
The Flight 238

MILLAY, EDNA ST. VINCENT (MRS. EUGEN JAN BOISSEVAIN), born at Rockland, Maine, 1892; educated at Vassar College. She has written several plays, the book of an opera, and numerous volumes of verse. She is generally regarded as one of the principal American poets now living.

PAGE
Renascence 469

MILTON, JOHN, born in London, 1608; died there, 1674. He was educated at Cambridge and traveled and studied in Italy. His assiduous work as Latin secretary of Cromwell made him blind, and his activity for the Commonwealth brought him into danger at the Restoration. After this he wrote *Paradise Lost.* His purpose in life was to serve humanity. The seriousness of his aims, and the grandeur

of his subject and style, added to the loftiness of his imagination, gave him a unique place in English poetry.

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L'Allegro 370
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On His Blindness 229
On his Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-three . . . 228
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont 228
From *Paradise Lost*, Book I 169

MOODY, WILLIAM VAUGHN, educator and dramatist, born at Spencer, Indiana, in 1869; died at Colorado Springs, in 1910. After graduating at Harvard, he traveled extensively in Europe and taught literature at Harvard and at The University of Chicago. His poetry shows a mind unusually active in the whole field of interests and emotions that make up life. In its seriousness of purpose it often goes counter to conventional opinion and mass judgments.

PAGE
On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines 467

MOORE, THOMAS, born in Dublin, 1779; died 1852. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He was one of the most popular poets of his day, with a facility in writing songs and a sure instinct for the public taste. He was a close friend of Byron, whose *Letters and Journals* he edited.

PAGE
''Tis the last rose of summer' 207

MORRIS, WILLIAM, artist and propagandist, born at Walthamstow, 1834; died at Kelmscott, 1896. He was educated at Oxford. He showed in youth an aptitude for literature and turned to it again and again in a life devoted to the fine arts—architecture, decoration and designing of all kinds, printing, and painting. More than anyone else of his time, he carried into art, poetry, and handicraft the spirit of medieval art.

PAGE
Shameful Death 52

NEWMAN, JOHN HENRY, born in London, 1801; died at Edgbaston, 1890. He was educated at Oxford, took orders in the Anglican Church and later in the Roman Catholic Church, and was at length created cardinal. In literature he is best known for his controversial

articles and essays, which are noteworthy for their brilliancy of analysis and their purity of style.

PAGE
The Pillar of the Cloud 439

O'Shaughnessy, Arthur William Edgar, born in London, 1844; died there, 1881. Nearly the whole of his active life was spent in a department of science in the British Museum, and his habits tended toward those of a recluse. His poems, of rather melancholy vein, are rich in imagination and color.

PAGE
From Ode: 'We are the music makers' 454

Peck, Samuel Minturn, born at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1854; died May 3, 1938. He published several volumes of verse, much of it in the light vein in which his work was highly successful.

PAGE
'Before the dawn' 245

Poe, Edgar Allan, critic and writer of short stories, born at Boston, Massachusetts, 1809; died at Baltimore, Maryland, 1849. Early left an orphan by his parents, who were actors, he was taken under the protection of a gentleman of Richmond, Virginia. He was educated in England and at the University of Virginia, and was for a while at the West Point Military Academy. Later, being self-dependent, he turned to literature, subsisting but poorly from his writings and his short-lived editorships, and dying in poverty. In lyrical genius he reaches the highest attainment of American poets.

PAGE
Israfel 438
To Helen 384

Pope, Alexander, born in London, 1688; died at Twickenham, 1744. Since he was a Catholic and might not attend one of the universities, he was privately educated. His love for literature developed early, and a passion for correctness in form led him to refine the heroic couplet to its greatest pitch of excellence in English. This form he used as a vehicle for his inborn resentment against man and society; through it he attained a preëminent position in the poetry of his day.

PAGE
From *The Rape of the Lock* 184

PRIOR, MATTHEW, courtier and diplomatist, born at Wimborne, Dorset, 1664; died in Cambridgeshire, 1721. He early secured the patronage of influential nobles, was educated at Cambridge, entered the public service, and filled important posts as secretary of various embassies. The grace and humor of his lyrics that won the favor of his patrons still keep his verse alive.

PAGE
To a Child of Quality Five Years Old 335

ROBINSON, EDWIN ARLINGTON, born at Head Tide, Maine, 1869; died in New York City, 1935. He was for a while at Harvard University and spent many years in literary work in New York. His verse follows well-settled and conventional forms, but in its serious search of life it is allied with the best of the more recent poetry.

PAGE
Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford 300

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA (GEORGINA), born in London, in 1830; died there, in 1894. She was the daughter of Gabriele Rossetti, an Italian poet and reformer who came to London about 1824, and sister of the poets Dante Gabriel and William Michael Rossetti. Her poems are serious in nature, many of them being religious and devotional.

PAGE
Song: 'When I am dead, my dearest' 214

ROSSETTI, DANTE GABRIEL, artist, born in London, 1828; died at Birchington-on-Sea, 1882. He was brother of Christina Rossetti. His education was at King's College and at art schools, and he spent many years in the study and practice of painting and designing, in which he reached high rank. He led in the Pre-Raphaelite English art movement of the nineteenth century. His poetry, exquisite in finish, is full of the spirit of mysticism. In his sonnets he reaches the perfection of the Italian form in English.

PAGE
The Ballad of Dead Ladies (Villon). 241
The Blessed Damozel 47
From *The House of Life*:
LXIII. Inclusiveness 235

RUSSELL, GEORGE WILLIAM ("Æ"), publicist, painter, born in County Armagh, Ireland, 1867; died in England, 1935. He was inter-

ested in the larger social and economic life of Ireland. His poetry is notable for its sensitiveness to nature and for its mystic strain.

PAGE
The Memory of Earth 464

SANDBURG, CARL, born at Galesburg, Illinois, 1878; now living at Harbert, Michigan. He was a student at Lombard College, Galesburg, and has been engaged in journalistic and kindred occupations in Chicago. His verse, of which he has published several volumes, attempts to show forth the material vigor of the West and some of the spiritual forces that underlie it.

PAGE
Grass 479

SASSOON, SIEGFRIED (LORAINE), born 1886, now living in England. Educated at Oxford, he served with distinction as a British officer during the World War. His war poetry is marked by a revulsion of feeling against the horrors of war.

PAGE
The Rear-Guard 417

SCHAUFFLER, ROBERT HAVEN, musician, editor, and miscellaneous writer, born at Brünn, Austria, of American parents, 1879; now living in New York City. He was educated at American colleges and universities, and at Berlin, and served in France during the World War as an officer in the American army. His verse is characterized by its human understanding.

PAGE
The Circus 419

SCOTT, (SIR) WALTER, antiquarian, ballad collector, novelist, born in Edinburgh, 1771; died at Abbotsford, 1832. He was educated for the law but early turned to literature. After collecting and editing border ballads he broke forth into narrative poetry, in which his success was surpassed in his own day only by that of Byron. His novels, which soon followed, together with his verse, present the most characteristic body of medieval romantic narrative to be found in the age of the Romantic revival.

PAGE
Hunting Song: 'Waken, lords and ladies gay' 205
Proud Maisie 44
'Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er' 206

SEEGER, ALAN, born in New York, 1888; killed in action in France, 1916. He was educated at Harvard, where he showed marked literary ability. He enlisted in the Foreign Legion of France and saw nearly two years of almost continual service in the World War.

PAGE
'I have a rendezvous with Death' 478

SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM, dramatist, born at Stratford-on-Avon, 1564; died there, 1616. His formal education was limited to the grammar school of his native town. His natural genius led him to literature, and he entered the struggle for patronage and fame in London at about his twenty-third year. His dramas range through comedy, history, and tragedy and represent the height of dramatic genius in the English language. It is in the breadth of his emotions and his comprehension of the soul of man in all conditions of life that he outranks all other English poets and stands with the great men of all time.

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'Blow, blow, thou winter wind' 195
'Fear no more the heat o' the sun' 422
'Let me not to the marriage of true minds' 226
'O mistress mine, where are you roaming?' 196
'Sigh no more, ladies' 328
Song: 'When icicles hang' 369
'That time of year thou mayst in me behold' 225
'When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced' 225
'When, in disgrace with fortune' 224
'When in the chronicle of wasted time' 226
'Who is Silvia?' 194

SHELLEY, PERCY BYSSHE, born in Sussex, 1792; died in Italy, 1822. His father was member of Parliament and heir to a large estate. His youth was taken up with idealistic, doctrinaire efforts for the improvement of society. The last few years, spent in Italy, were the most productive. Shelley's poetry as a whole has often the spirit of the propagandist, but his lyrics, in imagination, in structure, in emotional insight, are of the matter of universal poetry.

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From *Adonais* 360
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The Indian Serenade 210
To ——: 'One word is too often profaned' 211
To a Skylark: 'Hail to thee' 434
To Night: 'Swiftly walk o'er the western wave' 383

SHIRLEY, JAMES, dramatist, born in London, 1596; died there, 1666. He was educated at Oxford, took orders, but returned to London and worked constantly as a dramatist until the closing of the theaters at the time of the Civil War.

PAGE
Death's Final Conquest 423

SIDNEY, (SIR) PHILIP, courtier, statesman, critic, born at Penshurst, 1554; died at Arnheim, in the Netherlands, 1586, of a wound received in an engagement against the Spanish. His family was one of the foremost in England. He was for a while at Oxford, studied and traveled upon the Continent, and interested himself in domestic and foreign affairs for the honor of England. His personality and capacity gave him the confidence of all classes to the extent that no other man of his age was so lamented. In culture and versatility he represents the best spirit of the Renaissance.

From *Astrophel and Stella*:
PAGE
XXXI. 'With how sad steps, O Moon' 222
XXXIX. 'Come, Sleep! O Sleep' 222

SILL, EDWARD ROWLAND, teacher, essayist, born at Windsor, Connecticut, 1841; died at Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 1887. He was professor of English at the University of California. His essays and verse are characterized by restraint and delicacy of feeling.

PAGE
Opportunity 455

SOUTHEY, ROBERT, poet laureate, man of letters, born at Bristol, 1774; died at Keswick, 1843. He was educated at Westminster School and at Oxford, turned naturally to literature, and spent his whole life in literary work, often toilsome, always useful. In 1813 he was made poet laureate. In his youth he was greatly interested in social reform. He was then in intimate relation with Coleridge and Wordsworth, and throughout his life he was known as one of the Lake poets, both because of his residence at Keswick, in the English Lake region, and because of his sympathy with the poetry of the Lake school.

PAGE
The Battle of Blenheim 322

SPENSER, EDMUND, born in London, about 1552; died in Westminster, 1599. He was educated at Cambridge, obtained preferment through his literary work, and spent several years as a faithful official

of the government in Ireland. His long allegorical narrative *The Faerie Queene* represents the greatest achievement in nondramatic romantic poetry in the age of Elizabeth. He was called by Charles Lamb the "poet's poet."

From *Amoretti*:

PAGE
LXXV. 'One day I wrote her name upon the strand' . . 224

STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS, essayist, critic, and writer of fiction, born in Edinburgh, 1850; died in Samoa, 1894. Frail health from childhood interfered with the study and practice of either engineering or law, toward which he had a bent, and he came to literature through a long period of self-discipline in style. In his total work he best represents the rekindling of the romantic in English literature during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

PAGE
Requiem 216

SUCKLING, (SIR) JOHN, born in Middlesex, 1609; died, 1642. His life was that of a typical courtier of the second rank in the reign of Charles I. He devoted himself to the service of the king and to games and sports and wrote some of the most pleasing court lyrics of the day.

PAGE
'Why so pale and wan' 332

SURREY. *See* HOWARD, HENRY.

SWINBURNE, ALGERNON CHARLES, born in London, 1837; died there, 1909. He was educated at Eton and Oxford and devoted his life to literature. His training and his tastes led him toward the classics, and he produced many dramas of classic and medieval inspiration. His greatest excellence lay, however, in his lyrics. For abundance of imagery and inexhaustible flow of language and music his lyrics rank with the highest in a lyric age.

PAGE
The Garden of Proserpine 445
The Roundel 246
'When the hounds of spring' 400

SYMONS, ARTHUR, editor and literary critic, born in Wales, 1865; now living in England. Aside from much literary criticism, he has published several volumes of verse.

PAGE
A Roundel of Rest 246

TABB, JOHN BANNISTER, Roman Catholic priest, born in Virginia, 1845; died in Maryland, 1909. He was for many years a teacher at St. Charles College, Ellicott City, Maryland. It is for their compression and for their exquisite finish that the lyrics are worthy of note.

PAGE
Evolution 462
Fame 462

TEASDALE, SARA, born in St. Louis, 1884; died, 1933, in New York City. She published several volumes of lyrics notable for their spontaneous and untrammeled expression and their delicacy and penetration of thought.

PAGE
Leaves 476

TENNYSON, ALFRED (LORD), born at Somersby, in 1809; died at Aldworth in Surrey, in 1892. His father was an Anglican clergyman three of whose sons were poets. He was educated at Cambridge and devoted himself to poetry, of which he was a writer for more than sixty years. He was made poet laureate at the death of Wordsworth, and created Baron Tennyson in 1884. His, perhaps, is the poetry most fully representative of the age of Queen Victoria. It is usually serious, of high moral purpose and conscientious workmanship. Brilliancy and splendor are the characteristics that are most inherent in his work.

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'Break, break, break' 211
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From *In Memoriam*:
I. 'I held it truth, with him who sings' 363
II. 'Old yew, which graspest at the stones' . . . 363
XXI. 'I sing to him that rests below' 364
XXVII. 'I envy not in any moods' 365
LVII. 'Peace; come away: the song of woe' 366
Morte d'Arthur 175
'Sweet and low' 213
'Tears, idle tears' 212
The Lotos-Eaters 385
Ulysses 280

THACKERAY, WILLIAM MAKEPEACE, born in Calcutta, 1811; died in London, 1863. He was educated at Charterhouse and Cambridge. He was engaged in many kinds of literary work, and became one of

the foremost novelists of the century. Within his novels are found interesting pieces of verse, often characterized, like his prose, by gentle irony.

PAGE
Sorrows of Werther 340

THOMPSON, FRANCIS, born at Lancashire, 1859; died in London, 1907. He was educated for the Roman Catholic priesthood, and he afterward studied medicine. He contracted the opium habit, which led to lifelong misery. In London he was sought out by compassionate friends, who encouraged his poetic talent. His lyrics, often personal, show a nature wounded yet courageous.

PAGE
The Hound of Heaven 456

TIMROD, HENRY, born at Charleston, South Carolina, 1829; died at Columbia, South Carolina, 1867. He spent some time at the University of Georgia and then entered journalism. The Civil War destroyed his fortunes and ultimately led to his death.

PAGE
Ode: 'Sleep sweetly in your humble graves' 453

UNTERMEYER, LOUIS, critic, born in New York City, 1885; now living at Elizabethtown, New York. He has published several volumes of lyrics, the best of which are characterized by a vivid sense of social sympathy and social obligation.

PAGE
Caliban in the Coal Mines 469

VAUGHAN, HENRY, physician, born in Brecknockshire, Wales, 1622; died there, 1695. He was for a time at Oxford, but turned from academic subjects to medicine as his life work. He belongs with the "metaphysical" poets of his day, followers of Donne. There is in his poetry a mystical vein, and he probably influenced Wordsworth.

PAGE
The Retreat 425

WALLER, EDMUND, member of Parliament, born at Coleshill, Buckinghamshire, 1606; died at Beaconsfield, 1687. He was born to wealth, was educated at Cambridge, entered Parliament young, was in exile with the court during the Commonwealth, and returned to

live the life of a country gentleman. He brought into vogue the heroic couplet as the "correct" manner of English verse.

PAGE
'Go, lovely Rose!' 425

WHEELOCK, JOHN HALL, born on Long Island, in 1886; now living in New York City. He was educated at Harvard and at German universities and is engaged in magazine writing and other literary work. His poetry recognizes the claims upon life of the present day, yet retains the form and fineness of spirit of the generation past.

PAGE
Earth 479

WHITMAN, WALT, born on Long Island, 1819; died at Camden, New Jersey, 1892. His education was that of the common schools, and his occupations included teaching, carpentry, typesetting, and journalism. In various kinds of newspaper work he traveled over much of the United States. During the Civil War he was a nurse in field hospitals and at Washington. His verse attracted immediate attention in 1855, when *Leaves of Grass* appeared, and is regarded by Europeans as the most typical poetry produced in America. In its irregularity of form, its vigor, and its style and material it has been highly influential with the generation of poets following his death.

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Crossing Brooklyn Ferry 393
'O Captain! my Captain!' 215
Death Carol, from "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" 366

WHITTIER, JOHN GREENLEAF, journalist, propagandist, born at Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1807; died at Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, 1892. He had little formal education beyond the common schools, and his youth was occupied by farming and school teaching. Until the Civil War he was engaged almost constantly in journalistic and other antislavery work, and much of his verse tends in the same direction. His most enduring poetry is that which reflects the humble New England life of "plain living and high thinking."

PAGE
The Eternal Goodness 450

WILDE, OSCAR, dramatist, born in Dublin, 1856; died in Paris, 1900. He was educated at Oxford and identified himself with the

artistic revival of the mid-Victorian era. He produced several successful plays.

PAGE
Hélas! 236

WITHER, GEORGE, satirist, born at Brentworth, 1588; died in London, 1667. He studied at Oxford for about two years, after which he lived for some time in London the checkered life of a writer, student, and satirist awaiting patronage. Later he embraced the Puritan cause. He was best known to his contemporaries as a writer of hymns.

PAGE
'Shall I, wasting in despair' 330

WOLFE, CHARLES, Anglican clergyman, born in County Kildare, Ireland, 1791; died in Ireland, 1823. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Although known to his friends as a poet, he wrote little verse.

PAGE
The Burial of Sir John Moore 43

WOODBERRY, GEORGE EDWARD, educator, man of letters, born at Beverly, Massachusetts, 1855; died, 1930. He graduated from Harvard University, was professor of comparative literature at Columbia University, and the author of much literary biography and criticism. His poetry is characterized by firmness of form, catholicity of taste, and high seriousness of subject.

PAGE
'O, inexpressible as sweet' 216

WOODS, MARGARET LOUISA, writer of fiction, daughter of the late Very Reverend George Granville Bradley, Dean of Westminster, and wife of the Reverend H. G. Woods, President of Trinity College, Oxford. Born at Rugby, 1856; now living in England. Her poetry, of which she has written several volumes, is marked by spontaneity and by vividness of imagination.

PAGE
Passing 218

WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, 1770; died at Rydal Mount, near Ambleside, 1850. After some desultory attempts at literature he became acquainted with Coleridge, who collaborated with him in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. His

efforts toward the reform of poetry by making it the expression of actual life and making it an influence in life placed him as the leading figure in the Romantic movement in the English poetry of the early nineteenth century. He was made poet laureate at Southey's death in 1843.

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'A slumber did my spirit seal' 432
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WYATT, (SIR) THOMAS, courtier and statesman, born in Kent, 1503; died at Sherborne, 1542. He was educated at Cambridge, became early in life a court official, and engaged in the exciting and dangerous experiences of diplomatic missions and court intrigues. In Italy he became acquainted with the literature of the Renaissance and introduced the sonnet into English literature.

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YEATS, WILLIAM BUTLER, artist and dramatist, born at Dublin, 1865; died January 28, 1939. His scholastic training was gained in London and Dublin. He turned from art to literature and was one of the leading figures in the Celtic movement in poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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